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ABSTRACT

The Newspaper and Magazine section of the proceedings contains the following 11 papers: "Real-Time Journalism: Instantaneous Change for News Writing" (Karla Aronson and others); "Names in the News: A Study of Journalistic Decision-Making in Regard to the Naming of Crime Victims" (Michelle Johnson); "The Daily Newspaper and Audiotex Personals: A Case Study of Organizational Adoption of Innovation" (Debra Merskin); "What Content Shows about Topic-Team Performance" (John T. Russial); "Have You Heard the News? Newspaper Journalists Consider Audiotex and Other New Media Forms" (Jane B. Singer); "Who Reports the Hard/Soft News? A Study of Differences in Story Assignments to Male and Female Journalists at 'Newsweek'" (Dan Alinanger); "Welcome to Lilliput: The Shrinking of the General Interest in Magazine Publishing" (Erik Ellis); "The Retiring Feminist: Doris E. Fleischman and Doris Fleischman Bernays" (Susan Henry); "'Of Enduring Interest': The First Issue of 'The Readers Digest' as a 'Snapshot' of America in 1922--and its Legacy in a Mass-Market Culture" (Carolyn Kitch); "News Magazine Lead Story Coverage of the 1992 Presidential Campaign" (Mark N. Popovich and Sandra E. Moriarty); and "The Shrinking Debate over Journalistic Standards: Where Have All the Letters Gone?" (Brian Thornton). Individual papers contain references. (CR)

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Real-Time Journalism:
Instantaneous Change for News Writing

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Real-Time Journalism: Instantaneous Change for News Writing

INTRODUCTION

The financial news industry has delivered the news directly to users by telegraph since the mid-1860s and more recently by computers since the 1960s, eliminating the mass medium as intermediary. Today, real-time financial news wires transmit news instantaneously to subscribers around the world via high-speed computer and telecommunication networks.

Geared primarily to business coverage, these real-time services operate in all time zones 24 hours a day. More than 500,000 users -- primarily in financial institutions, business corporations and government agencies -- subscribe, paying $100 on average for the news. Some 13 news agencies, including Reuters PLC, Dow Jones & Co., Knight-Ridder Inc., and Bloomberg L.P., comprise the real-time media industry with estimated revenues of $500 million.[1]

Despite the forecast that the electronic delivery of news and information will be routine in the 21st century,[2] however, researchers know little about this highly profitable news industry. How does the content vary from newspapers? Is it as journalistically sound and as readable? The influences of real-time production processes and media routines on content are examined here and characteristics of articles in real-time and in newspapers are compared.

Results may shed light on an industry that, while owned by the world's largest news agencies, primarily serves an elite subscriber base. As scholars call attention to "the pressures that are transforming the goals, tools, professional standards and sociopolitical function of the major journalistic media,"[3] real-time financial news industry represents one such transformation that may become the model for future, more general, computerized news services. Studying the product could tell editors and publishers much about their own products as well as what continued movement to specialized, niche-based products might have in store as far as changing not only the product but the process needed to produce it.

THEORY AND BACKGROUND

Most news media content faces five levels of influence: individual, routines, organizational, extramedia and ideological.[4] Simply put, the individual level involves the professional background and personal characteristics of journalists. Meanwhile, three factors determine media routines: the audience as news consumers, the media organization as news producers and sources as suppliers of news. The structural and functional relationships of media employees determine media organization while the extramedia level refers to outside influences, such as sources, special interest groups, PR campaigns, advertisers, readers, and government, among others. Finally, the ideological level evaluates whose interests media routines and organization serve and the limits those interests place on news perspectives.

The five levels form a hierarchy of influences that can and do occur simultaneously. Each one's relative importance varies, but the model permits investigation into decisive influences. This study focuses on the influence of media routines -- "those patterned, routinized, repeated practices and forms that media workers use to do their jobs."[5] -- to examine how audiences, sources and the media organization affect real-time news production.

Audience needs. Audience-oriented media routines address what is acceptable to the audience. News criteria help predict what an audience will find appealing and important. For example, news judgment often is based on news values which commonly include: prominence/importance, human interest, conflict/controversy, the unusual, timeliness and proximity.[6] By comparison, real-time news delivery serves audience needs for timely information, considered important to the financial markets. Competition in real-time news delivery is measured in fractions of a second; a minute behind with the news is officially late. As one real-time news editor said, "Timeliness is everything. There was a time I thought AP (Associated Press) was a fast service, but they catered to the daily newspaper market. Competition is by seconds. Ten years ago it was by hours."[7] As a result, real-time media routines oriented toward timeliness and important financial market information would be expected to influence the amount and rate of news delivery to the audience.

A second audience-oriented media routine concerns news presentation techniques and formats that standardize story arrangements and headlines. Real-time news stories are transmitted on a computer screen, limiting story lengths to about 15 to 20 lines of text -- or about two or three short newspaper paragraphs of information -- per screen. Real-time news articles are generally released with a headline followed by five to seven short paragraphs of information, about two computer screen-pages long -- limits that would constrain a narrative story structure. But real-time stories can be released in several "news-takes" as separate news items, permitting a story to be developed at greater length. Editing for the computer screen involves more than just a tight writing style to conserve computer screen space. Editors must arrange the facts in a straightforward, logical order, selecting the most important information and omitting the rest.[8]

In addition, the real-time medium may intensify the need to condense news for the computer screen and, thus, for its audience. Reporters and editors have only enough time and space to convey the essential information, and that is usually all the reader wants to see. Since real-time news is directed toward a sophisticated audience of financial professionals, background material and explanation often aren't needed. With speed as the primary aim, writing style becomes secondary.

But another audience need -- readability -- remains crucial. Audience ability to immediately comprehend the material is of utmost concern to real-time journalists. "If the trader doesn't understand you, first he's going to curse you. Then he has to figure out what it means and that takes time," said one such reporter.[9] Ease of reading material is determined by several elements, including typography, reader interest and writing style,[10] of which the latter is a concern to this study.

And when it comes to writing style, readability measures often evaluate vocabulary and grammatical complexities,[11] two items also emphasized by research. For example, an early study concluded that the more difficult concepts conveyed in hard news resulted in longer words and longer sentences in the news stories.[12] And another study indicated a gradual decline in news readability over a century, mainly because of journalistic use of longer words. Meanwhile, the newspaper's role has changed with the advent of broadcast media, providing less narrative description of events and more difficult expository interpretation and explanation.[13] In fact, providing explanation and background material may solely be a print media function. For instance, a content analysis of videotex and newspaper articles found that the former were more likely to deal with immediate or breaking news.[14] By comparison, real-time news content also provides more of a news bulletin service, possibly leaving the role of providing explanation and background material to the newspaper.

Still, newspaper articles must be written to many reader levels. The financial news articles in The Wall Street Journal, for instance, serve different purposes for more than two million readers. In contrast, real-time media are written for a highly educated, specialized subscriber base that makes practical, daily use of the news. The contention that media routines address audience needs might indicate greater readability levels for real-time news articles because of the audience's need for quickly and immediately comprehensible information. Real-time readability also may be easier, given the limited computer screen space and the continuous dissemination of shorter-length articles. But real-time media's primary emphasis on speed necessitates quicker writing and editing and could lead to decreased readability levels when compared to newspaper articles.

Organization needs. As complex organizations with regular deadlines, the news media need systems to cope with the unpredictable and infinite number of occurrences they encounter and thus must routinize work to control it.[15] Media routines help organizations manage time and space constraints, e.g., news production deadlines and space or time available to present the news affect the amount and length of content.[16]

In the real-time industry, the central sites and times of news are linked across space and time through global computer networks, which expand the spatial and temporal scope of newswork. A real-time executive described this expansion: "The real-time medium demands relevance, speed and accuracy because of the time element. Trading activity is minute-to-minute. Real-time journalists are writing as it happens, and within seconds you see the (financial) markets react."[17]

Sources. As news suppliers, sources influence content by dictating routines via news conferences, news releases and PR campaigns. Sources also can restrict access and regulate information release.[18] Similarly, financial reporting requires expert knowledge of financial markets and institutions. Financial journalists develop their own knowledge of market activity but must extensively rely on expert sources to provide and interpret news.

Although news media theoretically have countless resources available, they heavily depend on interviews. Newsgathering conventions also tend to favor routine channels of news sources; staff and time limits encourage journalists to actively pursue only a small number of sources available and suitable in the past.[19] In financial news coverage, real-time media may rely upon the same routine sources of news, yet may encounter different source constraints.

For example, a minute-to-minute news environment requires a different reporting style. Real-time journalists depend on insights of sources actively engaged in financial market activity and can be in frequent contact with these sources throughout the day. Such heightened time pressure limits the time available to gather news from multiple sources. To illustrate, consider the study that found print media used more sources because of broadcast's more limited story lengths and tighter deadline constraints. Each medium favored particular source types, resulting in different story angles.[20]

In summary, the constraints of media routines should evidence themselves in real-time news content. This study will examine the characteristics of real-time financial news for that purpose and to answer the following research questions:

1. How do newspaper and real-time financial news articles compare in length?

2. How do newspaper and real-time financial news articles compare in readability?

3. How do newspaper and real-time financial news articles compare in source attribution?

METHOD

The authors selected the content of Dow Jones & Company's financial newswires and The Wall Street Journal to characterize the real-time medium and to compare its news articles to the newspaper articles. As the largest supplier of real-time financial news in the United States, the company distributes its real time news to about 190,000 computer terminals and publishes the country's largest newspaper. Despite the Dow Jones focus, findings may be representative of other real-time agencies because all serve the same customers, reporting essentially the same events by staffs that see each other at the same events and who trade notes about techniques; staffers commonly have worked at two or more different agencies.[21] Final consideration in the selection of Dow Jones news content were access to newswire articles and the electronic text articles of The Journal through the Dow Jones News/Retrieval (DJNR) online database.[22]

The sampling was conducted in two stages. First, the authors retrieved from the Dow Jones Business News Wires an approximate hour of news story text that covered the closing of the New York Stock Exchange, which was also expected to be an active news period. Second, this study was limited to market coverage and company news to ensure a reliable comparison of strictly financial reporting, as opposed to spot news, enterprise stories and government reports. Dow Jones Business News Wires on May 10, 1994 and the following day's issue of The Journal were selected for comparison.

All company stories published in the newspaper (excluding an insert) were selected to match with the real-time news articles. Of the 60 stories in the newspaper, 49 were matched with real-time articles. Market comment articles, published in the third section of The Journal, were selected to compare with the real-time market comments. Of the six such stories in the newspaper, five were compared with real-time articles.

For Research Question No. 1, the samples were analyzed for length in terms of the number of words, sentences and paragraphs per article. To measure Research Question No. 2, the Flesch Reading Ease and Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level tests were applied.[23]

For the final research question, the authors counted the number of attributed news sources identified either by direct quotation or by citation in the samples. The number of attributed sources identified by name was compared to the number of unidentified, or anonymous, sources in each medium. Intercoder reliability was 1.00 for the identified sources category and .84 for the anonymous sources category.[24]

RESULTS

Descriptors. In the DJNR system, 18 headlines are displayed on a single screen ("screen-page"). Each headline is numbered anywhere from 1 to 999, with the newest item always assigned No. 1. The user accesses the story by typing its headline number. The headlines also provide the source of the news, its release time and a textual summary of the subject. Real-time stories are written in "takes" or versions, and usually limited to about 45 lines (1.5 screens) of text.

As mentioned above, DJNR distributes news in a cycle of 1 to 999 items. The sample cycle was distributed in about 3.5 hours, or at a rate of 6.8 cycles per 24 hours, or nearly 7000 news items. The average number of items was about 285 per hour, or about 4.7 per minute.

Length. The first research question sought to compare how newspaper and real-time financial news articles in length; in this study, the average number of words, sentences and paragraphs for 54 newspaper and 120 real-time articles was calculated.

As Table 1 shows, all the newspaper articles contained an average of 297 words, compared with 181 for real-time stories. The average number of newspaper sentences was slightly more than 14 per article, compared with 8.5 for real-time stories. The average number of newspaper paragraphs was 7.5, compared with 5.5 for real-time articles. The ratio of words, sentences and paragraphs of the newspaper articles to the real-time articles was 1.64, 1.68 and 1.37, respectively, nearly half-again more the lengths. All the differences were statistically significant.

The authors also calculated the lengths of the company stories and the market comment news articles in each medium. As the table shows, the newspaper company stories averaged 237 words, 11.2 sentences and 5.9 paragraphs, compared with 168 words, 7.8 sentences and 5.1 paragraphs for the real-time company articles. The newspaper-to-real-time company story ratios for words and sentences and paragraphs were 1.41 and 1.44, respectively. The average number of paragraphs were not statistically different.

For the market comment newspaper articles, the stories averaged 889 words, 44 sentences and 23.2 paragraphs, compared with the real-time market comment averages of 226 words, 10.8 sentences and 6.5 paragraphs. The newspaper-to-real-time market comment ratios for words, sentences and paragraphs were 3.94, 4.09 and 3.55, respectively. All the differences were statistically significant.

Readability. Research Question No. 2 sought to determine how newspaper and real-time financial news articles compare in readability. This study used the Flesch tests measuring two levels of reading difficulty: semantic level of vocabulary -- which counts the average number of characters per word -- and syntactic level of sentence construction, which measures the average number of words per sentence.

In addition, reading ease was computed. The scores range from 0 to 100. Standard writing averages 60 to 70; the higher the score, the greater the number of people who readily can understand the text. The grade level score indicates a grade school level (e.g., 8.0 mean an eighth grader would understand the test); standard writing approximately equates to seventh-to-eighth-grade levels.

As Table 2 indicates, the average reading ease scores were not significantly different in newspaper (47.2) and real-time (48.9) articles. There was no difference in the company stories category, as both media recorded reading ease scores of about 45. And the market comments story category also showed only a slight difference. The similarities continued for grade level scores in each category, with the only differences between the two media coming in company stories; real-time company stories had a slightly higher grade level score.

Semantic and syntactic levels also showed no significant variation, although the latter seemed to provide the most contrast. As the table shows, semantic levels were similar across the two media for market comment stories (5.12 for newspaper and 5.07 for real-time) and only slightly different (5.35 and 5.29, respectively) for company stories.

Meanwhile, syntactic level differences were broader but still not significantly different; i.e., overall, the newspaper measured 21.4 words per sentence, compared with 21.9 for real-time articles. Among company stories, the averages were 21.4 for newspapers and 22.1 for real-time, while market comments showed averages of 20.7 and 21.1, respectively.

Sources. Research Question No. 3 sought to compare newspaper and real-time financial news articles in source attribution.

Overall, Table 3 shows the 54 newspaper articles averaged 1.4 news sources, compared with 0.9 sources for the 120 real-time articles -- 1.6 times as many but not a significant difference. Much of this was because of the company stories, where newspaper articles averaged 1.4 times as many news sources than did real-time stories, although this again was not a significant difference. The outstanding differences came in the market comment stories, where the newspaper averaged 5.4 attributed sources, compared with 1.4 for the real-time medium, a statistically significant difference.

This trend continued when the numbers were categorized by identified and unidentified sources. For example, overall the newspaper articles averaged 0.8 identified sources compared with 0.5 for the real-time stories; that meant the newspaper averaged 0.6 unidentified sources, compared with 0.3 for the real-time medium; but again, these differences were not significant. Again, the company story category reflected this difference most closely (0.6 identified sources for the newspaper, 0.5 for real-time; 0.4 and 0.2 unidentified, respectively). Still, the only significant differences were found among market comment stories, where newspaper stories averaged 2.2 identified and 3.2 unidentified sources compared with 0.6 and 0.8, respectively, for real-time stories. Interestingly, only in the market comment stories did either medium use more unidentified than identified sources.

DISCUSSION

This research focused -- and successfully utilized a communication model[25] -- on a single level of media routines' influences on news content. Other levels obviously need testing in real-time media; e.g., journalists' backgrounds and perceptions, organizational structure, economic structure and ideological concerns. This study's findings tend to lend support to contentions[26] that routines affect content; several practical explanations account for the results.

As to length, real-time news articles were shorter on average than the newspaper articles in number of words, sentences and paragraphs. Real-time editorial policy imposes maximum story lengths for easier reading on the computer screen. Shorter article lengths satisfy real-time audience needs for brief, factual information that can be read quickly. Time constraints to produce news also prohibit longer stories. Brief items are released as separate news takes over time. In contrast, newspaper articles consolidate information into a single story for daily publication. Such shorter lengths also might account for the greater amount and faster rate of real-time news delivery.

Regarding the nearly equal readability measures, real-time articles -- despite shorter length -- do not appear to be more or less difficult to read than do newspaper stories. But both media appear more difficult than standard reading. This may indicate the complexity of financial subject matter.[27] Still, neither real-time media's greater time pressure nor real-time's essentials-only content was enough to generate readability level differences.

Journalists -- real-time or otherwise -- still have to write simply. And both media use the same format conventions. Story organization and narrative structure have been found to be shared among all media[28] and endure in the real-time medium. Moreover, some of the stories in both media appeared to originate from the same sources. In some instances, when bylines were included, the same author was identified in the real-time and newspaper articles. Also, it seems much of the content originated from wire sources because two compared articles were so often similar. It seems both media may simply edit the material for their own formats.

Finally, practical considerations probably influence the usage of sources. Just as broadcast news reports use fewer sources than newspaper stories,[29] real-time -- with its similar time-sensitive orientation toward continuous production of shorter news items -- also uses fewer sources. Just as newswires used fewer sources than newspapers because of technologies, deadline constraints and work routines,[30] the real-time medium's sources may be less readily available to respond within the more immediate real-time deadlines, when compared with newspapers' longer deadline cycle.

In addition, news gathering promotes reliance upon routine channels of news sources. The time limits of news production encourage journalists to actively pursue only a small number of sources who are available and adequate.[31] Similarly, real-time journalists -- working under heightened deadline pressures -- may be less dependent on a broad range of news sources and more reliant on a smaller number of sources.

When it comes to attributing sources, real-time newspapers may be less concerned with identifying them. One real-time reporter, who also wrote a daily column for the newspaper, admitted as much.[32] Also, as such reporters acquire greater expertise in financial news, they may be less reliant on news sources.

Overall, these findings have significant implications for journalism practices. The real-time medium reorganizes journalistic routines. As a computer-oriented medium, it allows a great quantity of articles to be released, many simultaneously. Such continuous release and global, ongoing demand for news makes for shorter, quicker stories, which in turn necessitate fewer sources or -- at the least -- reliance on regular, more available sources in some cases.

Additional research needs to determine whether this translates into more one-sided, less objective stories. As a result, the entire concept of objectivity might need re-examination within the evolving framework of electronic media, e.g., do standard notions of objectivity apply? This in turn might suggest a broader concept -- or at least a redefinition of the term -- of newsworthiness for electronic journalists or, at least, a redefinition of the term.

Moreover, the rapid and continuous release of shorter stories in real-time raises additional questions about the nature of the information communicated; i.e., do real-time practices detract from the quality of content? Qualitative analysis is needed to determine whether real-time coverage ever surpasses superficiality.

From the consumer's standpoint, this study doesn't address the utility of such coverage. Similarly, retention and comprehension need further exploration, in light of the readability levels detected. The similarity of those levels in real-time and in the newspaper implies real-time journalists haven't changed their reporting styles. This assumes a similar degree of involvement on the part of the real-time reader, although no studies exist to confirm such an assumption.

In summary, this study supports the notion that the real-time medium alters journalism practices. Journalism news gathering, writing and editing practices are affected by the speed and computer format of real-time news delivery. However, real-time news articles closely resemble newspaper articles in structure and writing style. As with any study of a new technology/delivery system, this study raises many more questions than it answers. But it also represents a start in our understanding of how the real-time newspaper may affect the definition and performance of journalism.

NOTES

1. Robert Murphy, Financial Newswires: The Real Time News Agencies 1992-1993. New York: Waters Information Services, 1992, p. 8.
2. M.L. Stein, The Future of Electronic News. Editor & Publisher, May 2, 1992, pp. 70-71. See also James Carey and John Pavlik, Videotex: The Sword in the Stone in Demystifying Media Technology. California: Mayfield Publishing Co., 1993, pp. 163-168.
3. Jay Blumler, ed. Symposium: Journalism in Crisis and Change. Journal of Communication, March 1992, pp. 3-107.
4. Pamela Shoemaker and Stephen Reese, Mediating the Message: Theories of Influences on Mass Media Content. New York: Longman, 1991, pp. 3-4.
5. Shoemaker and Reese, op. cit., p. 85.
6. Shoemaker and Reese, op. cit., p. 91.
7. Sam Alcorn, deputy managing editor. Dow Jones Capital Markets Report, Dow Jones & Co., New York, March 1993. Personal interview.
8. Hilary Goodall and Susan Smith Reilly, Writing for the Computer Screen. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1988, p. 53.
9. Pomesh Sahi, reporter. Dow Jones & Co., New York, March 1993. Personal interview.
10. Robert Hoskins, A Readability Study of AP and UPI Wire Copy. Journalism Quarterly, Summer 1973, pp. 360-363.

TABLE 1: NEWSPAPER AND REAL-TIME AVERAGE STORY LENGTHS BY STORY ELEMENTS AND STORY TYPE

Story Type	Story Element	Newspaper	Real-Time
Company[a]	Words	236.84	168.00**
	Sentences	11.18	7.78**
	Paragraphs	5.86	5.13
Market[b]	Words	889.00	225.64***
	Sentences	44.00	10.75***
	Paragraphs	23.2	6.54***
All Stories[c]	Words	297.28	181.45***
	Sentences	14.22	8.48***
	Paragraphs	7.46	5.46**

* p<.05 ** p<.01 *** p<.001

[a] n = 49 for newspaper, 92 for real-time

[b] n = 5 for newspaper, 28 for real-time

[c] n = 54 for newspaper, 120 for real-time

Names in the News: A study of journalistic decision-making in regard to the naming of crime victims

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Names in the News: A study of journalistic decision-making in regard to the naming of crime victims

Several studies have documented a trend of journalists using fewer names of crime victims, but few have looked at how journalists decide whether or not to use victims' names. This study looks at journalists' decision-making process and finds most journalists have standard practices they probably follow with relatively little thought. However, they are willing to consider many variables, including the effect of identification on victims, and are probably becoming less routinized and more sensitive in their decision-making.

Names in the News: A study of journalistic decision-making in regard to the naming of crime victims

Finding a theoretical framework for studying journalists' decision-making in regard to ethical problems can be frustrating for scholars. In most studies, the data have shown that journalists do not follow any kind of procedure that conforms to classical models of ethical decision-making. After attempting to categorize editors' decision-making process in regard to naming rape victims, one researcher concluded:

> . . . editors do not seem to play favorites with ethical theories. If an argument supports their current practice, they embrace it as a good argument. If it does not, they reject it. This practice-oriented approach to justifying their opinions is probably typical of journalists who have not been educated in formal ethical theory, and we presume most have not.[1]

This conclusion, however, does not do justice to journalists' decision-making process. Few people who have not been trained in classical ethics can outline a procedure for decision-making that is clearly utilitarian, Kantian or otherwise formally structured. Henry Aiken suggests that discussions of ethical decision-making that pit one system against another are, in fact, fairly useless.

AIKEN'S LEVELS OF MORAL DISCOURSE

Instead, Aiken suggests analyzing ethical decision-making according to the depth of thought given to the issue.[2] He outlines four levels of thought at which people may make decisions. First, there is the expressive level. Here, people instinctively evaluate things as good or bad. In many cases, these assessments are adequate; they establish personal preferences.

At the next level, people make decisions based on moral rules. They begin to address the question of what is right or what should be done. They may decide to tell the truth because it is the right thing to do. In many cases, these rules are so ingrained in people's minds, the course of action requires little conscious thought.

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[1] Samuel P. Winch, "On naming rape victims: How editors stand on the issue" (paper presented to the Commission on the Status of Women at the national convention of Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Boston, Mass., August 1991), 8.

[2] Henry David Aiken, *Reason and Conduct* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), 65-87.

Aiken says most people stop their decision-making process at the level of moral rules. However, more complex problems sometimes force them to ask whether the course of action suggested by a particular moral rule is in fact the right one to take. "It may be that the moral rules conflict, or that a consistent adherence to them would result in general inconvenience or suffering. It may be that they run too persistently against the grain of human need or inclination."[3] In these cases, people move to an ethical level of decision-making in which they reevaluate their moral rules and attempt to determine why a particular course of action is the right one.

Finally, Aiken says, people may move to a post-ethical level, where they begin to ask why they should be moral or why they should do the right thing. For some people, such as Kant, the answer to this is given. Every rational being is assumed to recognize moral rules and to question them is to go beyond the bounds of reason.[4] But for others, the questions of the post-ethical level are compelling. For example, Aiken says, existentialists work at this level because they consider themselves only bound by moral rules for as long as they choose to be.

LEVELS OF DISCOURSE IN JOURNALISTIC DECISION-MAKING

Scholars such as Louis Hodges and Robert Steele have adapted Aiken's levels of discourse in teaching ethics to journalists.[5] Steele's model addresses three levels of discourse: gut reaction, which is similar to the expressive level; rule obedience, which is adherence to moral or professional rules; and reasoned thinking, which combines the ethical and post-ethical levels. This study will use Steele's framework to examine journalists' decision-making process in regard to naming crime victims.

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[3] Ibid., 75.

[4] Ibid., 83.

[5] Steele adapted his model from Hodges' teaching which draws on Aiken's work. Bob Steele, personal correspondence with author, March 19, 1996.

Scholars have found evidence of journalists making decisions at the gut level, or based on their initial instincts.[6] In an examination of journalists' decision-making process in covering a suicide recorded on film, Patrick Parsons and William Smith found that most journalists gave little thought to how they would use the film. Most considered no alternatives to the course of action they took.[7] Given that most journalists produced similar coverage of the event, Parsons and Smith suggested that standards on how to present graphic events were so well established that most journalists did not have to think about what to do. The "correct" choice was ingrained in them. While it appears that journalists reacted instinctively in this case, it may be that they can only rely on these "gut reactions" in clear-cut situations where there is no question about what rules prevail.

An ethical dilemma in which there are clear-cut answers, however, is almost an oxymoron. Researchers have found that journalists often consider several moral rules relevant to their dilemmas, and in fact, Parsons and Smith noted the influence of journalistic norms on journalists' "gut" decisions.[8] In a study on journalists' motives for making decisions, Singletary et al. found most journalists are concerned with "credibility with the audience, the public's need to know, and standards of their colleagues and employer, and of their field."[9] The inclusion of various groups' standards on this list suggests journalists acknowledge guidelines or codes of behavior that they should follow.

Some researchers say the prevailing moral rule in modern journalism is the maintenance of objectivity.[10] Rilla Dean Mills found that when journalists talked about ethical decisions, they most often talked about circumstances in which they were asked to do something that might inhibit their ability to be objective, such as taking gifts, being involved in community activities or having business investments in certain areas. They also talked about biases on their part or on the part of management that might influence how they wrote particular stories. Mills concluded that for most journalists: ". . . ethics were viewed as questions of adherence to a rather narrowly defined code of professional behavior."[11]

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[6] For example, see Carl Hausman, *The Decision-Making Process in Journalism* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers, 1990), 4, 99; Dona Hayes, "Local Television Coverage: Ethics and Decision Making," *American Behavioral Scientist* 35 (1991): 178.

[7] Patrick R. Parsons and William E. Smith, "R. Budd Dwyer: A Case Study in Newsroom Decision Making," *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 3 (1988): 88-89.

[8] Parsons and Smith, 92.

[9] Michael W. Singletary, Susan Caudill, Edward Caudill and Allen White, "Motives for Ethical Decision-Making," *Journalism Quarterly* 67 (1990): 972.

[10] Rilla Dean Mills, "Newspaper Ethics: A Qualitative Study," *Journalism Quarterly* 60 (1983): 589-594; John C. Merrill, "Is Ethical Journalism Simply Objective Reporting?" *Journalism Quarterly* 62 (1985): 391-393.

But other researchers have uncovered evidence of journalists engaging in reasoned decision-making.[12] Steele found that photojournalists used a variety of methods for making decisions. Often, they tried to put themselves in their subjects' shoes or consider the consequences of their actions. They also applied their personal ethics and standards within their field. In summarizing photojournalists' decision-making process, Steele said:

> They are generally individuals who have strong feelings about journalistic ethics and they often enunciate their ethical values quite clearly. At the same time, once they put that camera on their shoulder, they are forced to balance their personal ethics with the competing values of their working environment. The forces of competition, peer pressure, organization and management expectations, production aesthetics, and journalistic norms make that value balancing a dilemma.[13]

MAKING DECISIONS ON IDENTIFICATION

During the 1980s and early 1990s, researchers documented a trend in news organizations using fewer names and addresses of victims in their stories.[14] This was particularly true in the case of sex-crime victims, which 96 percent of newspaper editors said they would not identify in 1988.[15] However, at the same time that journalists were reporting using fewer names and addresses, they said they were making more decisions about using those names and addresses on a case-by-case basis. As a result, a 1990 study found that only 41 percent of newspaper editors had a hard-and-fast rule to never use rape victims' names.[16] These studies indicate that journalists may be moving from an era of rule obedience—"we name rape victims" or "we don't name rape victims"—to one of reasoned decision-making in regard to the identification of crime victims.

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[11] Mills, 594.

[12] Robert M. Steele, "Video Ethics: The Dilemma of Value Balancing," *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 2 (1987): 7-17; Russell B. Williams, "Ethical Reasoning in Television News: Privacy and AIDS Testing," *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 10 (1995): 118.

[13] Steele, 16-17.

[14] Tommy Thomason and Paul LaRocque, "Television and Crime Coverage: A Comparison of the Attitudes of News Directors and Victim Advocates" (paper presented to the Radio-TV Journalism Division at the annual convention of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Boston, August 1991); Winch, "On naming rape victims: How editors stand on the issue"; Tommy Thomason and Paul LaRocque, "Newspaper Identification of Crime Victims: Editors Change Address Policies" (paper presented to the Newspaper Division at the annual convention of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Minneapolis, August 1990); Rita Wolf, Tommy Thomason and Paul LaRocque, "The Right to Know vs. the Right of Privacy: Newspaper Identification of Crime Victims," *Journalism Quarterly* 64 (1987): 503-507; Carol Oukrop, "Views of Newspaper Gatekeepers on Rape and Rape Coverage" (Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas, 1982, photocopy); "Many editors agree on how to report rapes," *Editor and Publisher*, 22 January 1983, 2.

The authors of these studies suggest journalists may have been motivated to change their approach to the identification of crime victims because of dissatisfaction on the part of the public. Journalists feared members of the public would seek legislation limiting their access to information if they did not show more sensitivity toward victims.[17] Input by victims' advocates, increased sensitivity toward victims and awareness of community standards also may have influenced journalists' decision-making.

While the studies of the past two decades did a good job of describing standards—and the changes in standards—within the journalistic community, they do not shed much light on why journalists do what they do and how they make decisions to do that. Thomason and LaRocque found that journalists who are concerned with the public's right to know are more likely to use victims' names, and those who are concerned with victims' privacy are less likely to do so.[18] This difference begins to explain journalists' decisions, but it doesn't illustrate the level of thought journalists are engaging in. They may be following a moral rule, such as "I have a duty to include all information the public has a right to know," or they may be evaluating several different factors and deciding the public's right to know outweighs all the others, including potential harm to the victim.

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[15] Thomason and LaRocque, "Newspaper Identification of Crime Victims: Editors Change Address Policies," 6.
[16] Winch, 6.
[17] Thomason and LaRocque, "Newspaper Identification of Crime Victims: Editors Change Address Policies," 7; Thomason and LaRocque, "Television and Crime Coverage: A Comparison of the Attitudes of News Directors and Victim Advocates," 6.
[18] Wolf, Thomason and LaRocque, 506-507; Thomason and LaRocque, "Newspaper Identification of Crime Victims: Editors Change Address Policies," 9.

This study fills a hole in the literature by showing the level of thought journalists engage in when deciding whether or not to name crime victims. It distinguishes between journalists who are making decisions reflexively, trapped, as Steele would say, by rule obedience, and those who are trying to make reasoned, defensible decisions. In addition, it takes a first step at measuring the complexity of journalists' decision-making process by examining the number of factors journalists consider and the weight they give to each factor. Unlike previous researchers, I have not given attention to the result of journalists' decision-making—the means of identification used or not used in particular situations—because the issue was not what they would do but how they would decide to do it. There may be many satisfactory—even right—decisions in a particular situation. For me, the question was whether or not journalists were putting a significant amount of effort into making a satisfactory decision.

METHOD

A telephone survey was conducted of journalists at all state newspapers and television stations during February 1996. All mainstream, daily newspapers and television stations with news departments were included in the sample.[19] In addition, 39 weekly newspapers were selected in the following manner: the largest weekly in each of the state's counties was chosen from a list of weekly newspapers provided by the state Newspaper Publishers Association. Four counties did not appear to have a weekly newspaper so one was substituted from a nearby county. Obviously, this is not a random sample. It is a purposive sample, designed to yield information about standards and decision-making at the state's most influential news organizations.

At the newspapers, interviews were conducted with the city editor or the staff member designated by others as most appropriate. At the weeklies, respondents' exact job titles varied considerably; they included editor, managing editor, news editor, city editor or some other variation thereof. In some cases, the publisher also served as editor.

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[19] The sample included 24 daily newspapers and 14 television stations. One daily newspaper was not included because it only covers business.

At television stations, interviews were conducted with the news director except in two cases. In one case, an interview was done with a news producer, and in another a public relations director was interviewed after it was determined that he was familiar with the news operations of the station and the news director and producers could not be reached.

RESPONSE RATE

In total, 79 news organizations were contacted, and 72 interviews were completed, yielding a response rate of 91 percent. The response rate for television stations was 71 percent as contact could not be made with news directors at four stations even after more than five attempts. The response rate for daily newspapers was 96 percent, with one editor declining to be interviewed. The response rate for weekly newspapers was 95 percent. One editor declined to be interviewed, and at another newspaper, the editor's position was temporarily vacant. To replace those two newspapers, two more weeklies were chosen from the same area, so that of 41 weeklies contacted, interviews were completed at 39.

Looking at the respondents as a whole, 49 percent were from weekly newspapers. Five percent were from semi-weekly newspapers.[20] Thirty-two percent worked at daily newspapers, and 14 percent worked at television stations.

Most of the newspapers were small, community-oriented organizations. Fifty-five percent had a circulation of less than 10,000. Twenty-one percent had a circulation of 10,000 to 24,999. Sixteen percent had a circulation of 25,000 to 50,000 and 8 percent had a circulation of more than 50,000.

The television stations served population areas of 77,000 to 2,000,000 people. Seventy percent served population areas of less than 1,000,000 people. The average population size was 712,170 people.

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[20] For the purposes of analysis, these newspapers were grouped with the weeklies.

RESULTS

Most editors and television news directors decide whether or not to name crime victims on a case-by-case basis. However, editors of daily newspapers are less likely to make decisions on a case-by-case basis than are editors of weekly newspapers or television news directors (See Table 1). Sixty-one percent of the editors at daily newspapers said they make case-by-case decisions on whether to use victims' names. In contrast, 87 percent of weekly editors and all the television news directors said they do.[21]

Editors at daily newspapers may be more likely to rely on a policy in making decisions about naming crime victims because they have more staff members to supervise. Twenty-nine percent of the news organizations in this study had one person covering crime part-time or in addition to other duties. Six percent had one person covering crime full-time. The other news organizations had more than one person covering crime. Daily newspapers were much more likely than weekly newspapers to have more than one person covering crime (Table 2). However, they weren't more likely than television stations to have multiple people covering crime, so staff size cannot explain the difference between daily newspapers and television stations in their use of a policy on naming crime victims.

THE INFLUENCE OF POLICY

News organizations that rely on policies in making decisions. Looking at the 14 news organizations that rely on a policy to determine whether or not they will name victims, one can see there is no standard in the industry (See Table 3). Two respondents said they name victims of all crimes.[22] Four usually do not name victims of any crime.

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[21] Further analysis showed no relationship between newspapers' circulation size, and their likelihood to make decisions on a case-by-case basis. However, weekly newspapers had significantly smaller circulation sizes. Ninety-five percent of the weeklies had a circulation of less than 25,000, while only 43 percent of the dailies did ($x^2=20.84$, $p<.001$).

[22] This result was surprising and may be misleading. All news reports on the subject that I have found say only one newspaper in the state regularly names victims of all crimes, including sex crimes. Therefore, I expected only one newspaper to fall into this category. However, comments made by editors at some of the small weeklies indicated that when they think about naming crime victims, they don't think about victims of violent crimes, such as rape or murder, because they have few of those crimes in their areas. For example, one editor said there has been only one murder and no rapes reported in his circulation area during the 18 years he has worked at the paper. I believe the response of the second of these two newspaper editors

The others name victims of some crimes but not others. Five will not name victims of sex crimes. Two will not name victims who are juveniles.

News organizations with established policies. While only 19 percent of the respondents said they rely primarily on their policies to make decisions about naming crime victims, 47 percent work at news organizations that have policies on the issue. Again, daily newspapers are more likely to have formal policies than weekly newspapers or television stations (See Table 4).

Most of the policies outlined by respondents dealt with juveniles or sex-crime victims. Thirty-five percent of the policies prohibited the naming of juveniles, and they usually included juvenile suspects and victims. Sixty-two percent prohibited the naming of sex-crime victims, although a few allowed identification if the victim filed a civil suit.

A handful of news organizations had policies that were based on reasons for withholding victims' names. One news organization had a policy that calls for respect for victims' privacy. Three had policies that said victims should not be named if there was a threat to their safety.

COMMON PRACTICES

While less than half of the respondents have policies on naming victims, a majority have some guidelines they follow. Sixty percent said there are crimes for which they would always name the victim. Seventy-eight percent said there are crimes for which they would never name the victim.

Using victims' names. When asked to name the crimes for which they would always use victims' names in stories, most journalists cited murder (See Table 5). Thirty-eight news organizations say they use murder victims' names. For half of those news organizations, it is the only crime for which they will always name the victim. Twelve news organizations name victims of all serious felonies, and four said they usually name

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to this question is due to this kind of situation. The editor has a policy of naming victims of all crimes that occur in his area, but it's likely that he hasn't dealt with a story about a sex crime.

victims of all crimes except sex crimes. Four news organizations name victims of property crimes or identify them by their address.

Reasons for using victims' names. Most journalists have reasons for using particular victims' names, although the depth of thought in their answers varies greatly. When asked why her newspaper used particular victims' names, one editor listed five reasons: the names are of interest to readers; they make the story more complete; people may know the victim; the accused needs to face his or her accuser; and it seems fair to name all parties involved in the incident. In contrast, four respondents could give not explain why they named victims. Nearly 80 percent of the respondents who said they always use the names of some crime victims gave one or two reasons for using those names.

The most common reason journalists gave for naming a victim was that the victim was dead (See Table 6). There seems to be a sense among journalists that reporting deaths in the community is part of their job. Several editors noted that deaths affect other community members who need to make mourning arrangements or who may want to offer comfort to the victims' families. Also, a few journalists said murder victims cannot be harmed by having their names in the newspaper. Unlike living people, they cannot be embarrassed or re-victimized, and from a practical standpoint, they can't sue for invasion of privacy or libel.

Other journalists said the public should be informed about serious crimes regardless of whether or not they resulted in a death. These journalists said people want to know about these crimes, and they have a right to know about them. These responses indicate journalists are most likely to name crime victims when they see a community need for the name to be known or some social good resulting from the act. They either think victims will not be harmed by identification, or they think the good of the community in these instances outweighs any harm to the victims.

Withholding victims' names. When asked to name the crimes for which they would never use victims' names, most respondents cited sex crimes (See Table 7). This is not surprising given the extensive discussion about naming rape victims within the journalistic community. Of the 49 respondents who said they would not name victims of sex crimes, 45 specifically said they would not name rape victims. Thirty-two others specifically said they would not name victims of child molestation.

Journalists seem to be most concerned about victims of so-called unspeakable crimes.[23] In addition to sex crimes, respondents were most likely to say they would not name victims of child abuse or domestic violence. They also showed an inclination to withhold the names of suicides and juvenile victims of any crime.

Reasons for withholding victims' names. Again, most journalists seemed to have given some thought to why they do not name victims of these crimes. Only two could not articulate a reason for it. Most could give one or two reasons, and one-fifth provided three reasons.

Most commonly, journalists said they do not name victims of a particular crime because they do not want to embarrass them or subject them to some kind of social stigma (See Table 8). Not surprisingly, respondents almost always gave this reason when explaining why they do not name victims of sex crimes. Journalists were also quick to cite privacy as a reason for not naming sex-crime victims. Their use of phrases such as "the private nature of the crime" or "It's a privacy issue" indicates they see a fundamental difference between being a victim of a sex crime and being a victim of other crimes. Generally, they did not cite privacy as a reason for not using the names of victims of non-sex crimes, although a few did mention privacy as a reason for not naming juvenile victims.

The second most common reason journalists gave for not using victims' names was a desire to protect them from further harm. In a few cases, respondents specifically mentioned protecting victims from further physical harm, but often it was unclear whether they were referring to physical or emotional harm. They tended to use phrases such as "it might victimize them further," "I don't want to re-victimize them," "to protect the victim" and "the victim could be further hurt."

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[23] Among others, Judith Herman has used this term. Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: BasicBooks, 1992), 1.

Some respondents cited social norms as a justification for not naming victims of particular crimes. Ten named journalistic tradition as a reason for not naming victims, usually victims of sex crimes, and three said naming victims of certain crimes would violate their communities' standards.

COMMUNITY INFLUENCE

Respondents seemed to be fairly well informed in regard to standards within their communities.[24] Seventy-two percent had discussed their policy or practices for naming crime victims with community members. Thirty-nine percent had discussed the issue with victims' advocates, and many of those who hadn't indicated the primary reason for this was the absence of a victims' advocacy organization in their community. Nearly all the journalists had discussed their policy with law enforcement agents. Seventy-five percent had talked to police, and 59 percent had talked to a district attorney or local prosecutor.

Influence of police. As a result of their discussions with community members, law enforcement agents and other journalists, 34 percent of the respondents said they had made changes in their policy or practices. Further analysis showed that discussions with police were most likely to result in change (See Table 9). Forty percent of the news organizations that had engaged in discussions with police made some kind of change in their policy or practices, while only 8 percent of those who had not talked with police did. Making changes in policy or practices was not significantly related to discussing the issue with other journalists, district attorneys, victims advocates or community members in general.

Types of changes made. Of the respondents who made changes in their policy or practices, 10 made a specific change in policy, and seven said they had become generally more sensitive in their use of victims' names. Four had made exceptions to their normal practice or policy in specific cases but had not changed their standard practices or policies.

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[24] In addition, they seemed well informed about standards within the journalistic community. Sixty-one percent had discussed the issue of naming crime victims with journalists employed by other news organizations.

The specific changes news organizations made were diverse. One newspaper stopped using victims' names until after the case had been decided in court. Another stopped using the names of child and sexual abuse victims. Somewhat similarly, one newspaper began using the generic term sex crime instead of words like rape, incest or molestation because the specific word could identify the victim by age or relationship to the perpetrator. In contrast, another newspaper began using the term incest whereas it hadn't before because staff members feared unintentionally identifying the victim.

Talking about changes made at his newspaper, one editor said: "In general, I think the trend is to be very deferential to crime victims and to try to protect them."

MAKING DECISIONS

The decision process many journalists use in deciding whether or not to use victims' names is fairly complicated. When given 11 items they might consider in deciding whether to use a victim's name, respondents on average said six of those items would be important or very important to them in making their decision (See the list of factors in Table 11). If one includes items they said would be somewhat important to them in making their decision, then the average number of factors they consider increases to eight. In addition, 25 percent of the respondents volunteered an additional factor they would consider in deciding whether or not to use victims' names. Most often, they said they would consider possible interference with a police investigation or a possible threat to the victim.

The existence of a policy, or even reliance on one, was not related to the number of factors journalists considered in making a decision. Respondents who relied on a policy to make decisions considered as many other factors as did those who made decisions on a case-by-case basis. They did say they would give more weight to a policy than did those who made decisions on a case-by-case basis, but the difference between the groups was not statistically significant.[25]

However, respondents who had more involved decision-making processes, that is those who considered more factors, were less likely adhere to absolute guidelines and seemed to be more protective of victims' identities. The more factors respondents considered, the less likely they were to say there were crimes for which they would always name the victim (See Table 10). At the same time, the number of factors respondents considered was not related to their likelihood to say there were crimes for which they would never name the victim. Therefore, it seems that as journalists begin to think more about naming victims and include more factors in their decision-making process, they become less likely to routinely name victims of crime.

Journalists' decision-making process seems to become more routinized the longer they are in the field. There is negative correlation of moderate strength between the number of years journalists have worked in news and the number of factors they consider in deciding whether or not to name crime victims ($r= -.25$, $p<.05$). There is a stronger correlation between the number of years journalists have worked in their present job and the number of factors they consider ($r= -.30$, $p<.01$). Therefore, changing jobs seems to have a mitigating influence on how routinized journalists become.[26] Of course, one could argue that as journalists spend more time in the field, they become better at identifying key issues that will cause problems for their news organizations or for victims, and that while their decision-making process becomes more routinized, it also becomes more efficient.

Weight given to factors in journalists' decision-making process. The most important factor for journalists in this study was whether or not the victim's family had been told of the crime (See Table 11). Sixty-seven percent of the respondents said family notification would be very important to them in making their decision. Another 14 percent said it would be important. Most respondents indicated it was important because in cases of death they did not want to publish victims' names until family members had been told.

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[25] Respondents who relied on a policy to make decisions gave it an average score of 4.29 on a five-point scale of importance, while those who made decisions on a case-by-case basis gave policy an average score of 3.76. $F=1.47$, $p<.23$.

[26] The number of years journalists have worked in the field is tightly correlated to the number of years they have worked at their present job ($r=.58$, $p<.01$).

However, there were differences between news organizations in the amount of weight they gave to family notification. Journalists at television stations placed more importance on family notification than did those at weekly newspapers.[27] This difference may be due to the length of the organizations' news cycle. Television stations gather news continuously and broadcast every couple hours. It's quite likely that they may have a report of a death before police can find all of the victim's immediate family. With daily newspapers, there is less of a risk of publication before family have been notified, but it's still a possibility, particularly when deaths occur near the papers' deadlines. But by the time weekly newspapers go to press, it's almost certain family members will have been notified. Therefore, editors at weekly newspapers have less reason to worry that family members will learn about the death from the newspaper.

The second most important factor for respondents was the kind of crime. Forty-three percent said it would be very important to them in making their decision, and 38 percent said it would be important. In their comments, journalists generally indicated the kind of crime was important because if it was a sex crime, they would not use the victims' names.

The third most important factor was the age of the victim. Forty-two percent of the respondents said that was very important to them, and another 26 percent said it was important. Respondents usually remarked that they would not use the name of minor victims or that they would be more cautious in using the names of minor victims.

Journalists also found the source of the victim's name to be important. Seventy-two percent said it was very important or important to them where the name came from.

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[27] $F=4.20$, $p<.05$. The mean scores on the scale of importance for the three groups were: television stations, 4.90; daily newspapers, 4.46; and weekly newspapers, 3.78. Using Scheffe's test, one finds the means for television stations are significantly different from that of weekly newspapers at the $p<.05$ level.

Many said they would not use a victim's name unless police confirmed it. However, 13 percent said getting the name from the police rather than an unofficial source would not make a difference to them when they were deciding whether to use the name. One editor said that as long as the name came from a source she trusted, she did not need to confirm it with police.

Fifty-one percent of the respondents said a formal policy established by their newspaper would be very important to them in deciding whether or not to use a victim's name. Another 31 percent rated it important or somewhat important. However, 41 percent of those who said a policy was at least somewhat important worked at news organizations that don't have a formal policy. A few explained this inconsistency by saying that if their news organization had a formal policy, it would be important to them in making a decision. It's worth noting that there were significant differences between news organizations in the importance journalists assigned to a formal policy.[28] Not surprisingly, journalists at daily newspapers, which were more likely to have formal policies, said a policy would be more important to them than did journalists at television stations or weekly newspapers.

Fifty-six percent of the respondents said how well-known the victim was within their community would be important or very important to them. There were significant differences between news organizations, however.[29] Television news directors found this factor to be much more important than did editors of weekly newspapers. Editors at daily newspapers fell in the middle in their estimation of the importance of celebrity. It's likely that this factor is more important to television news directors because they can transmit less news overall due to time constraints, and so the news they do carry must interest as many people as possible. Generally, people are more interested when a "known" person is a victim than when an "unknown" is. Newspapers carry more news and can afford to give publicity to crimes involving people who are not well-known. In addition, several weekly newspaper editors remarked that in their small communities everyone knows everyone else so even people who have no claim to celebrity are in fact well-known. Weekly newspaper editors may be more likely to treat victims equally since they all have some degree of name recognition within their community.

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[28] $F=4.36$, $p<.05$. The means for the three groups were: television stations, 3.70; daily newspapers, 4.57; and weekly newspapers, 3.48. Using Scheffe's test, one finds the mean for daily newspapers to be different from that of weekly newspapers at the $p<.05$ level.

[29] $F=3.46$, $p<.05$. The means for the three groups were: television stations, 4.30; daily newspapers, 3.69; and weekly newspapers, 3.00. Using Duncan's multiple range test, one finds the mean for television stations to be different from that of weekly newspapers at the $p<.05$ level.

Respondents also differed over the importance of a request by the victim not to use his or her name. Overall, 35 percent of the respondents said a request by the victim would be important or very important. But television news directors placed much more importance on a request than did weekly newspaper editors.[30] The reason for this difference between news organizations is unclear. Three-fourths of the respondents had received requests from victims not to use their names, and in those cases, 77 percent left out the victims' names in at least some instances. Twenty-nine percent left the name out of their stories whenever they received requests from victims. But television news directors were no more likely to heed victims' requests than were newspaper editors regardless of the amount of importance they said they put on those requests.

THE VALUE OF THE NAME

Most news organizations in this study did not carry a lot of crime news. Fifty-six percent carried less than three local crime stories per broadcast or issue.[31] Only 3 percent carried more than six local crime stories per broadcast or issue. In regard to the crime news they did report, 85 percent of respondents could see some value in including victims' names. Most commonly, they said people in the community might know the victim and want to know he or she had been hurt. Alternatively, they said, community members might want to know that no one they knew was the victim (See Table 12). Journalists in large communities were just as likely to mention this as those in small ones.

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[30] $F=3.63$, $p<.05$. The means for the three groups were: television stations, 4.00; daily newspapers, 2.83; and weekly newspapers, 2.77. Using Scheffe's test, one finds the mean for television stations to be different from that of weekly newspapers at the $p<.05$ level.

[31] For newspapers, stories were defined as articles of more than three column inches. Some newspapers run news briefs or shorts about crime in addition to bylined stories.

Most of the value journalists saw in publishing or broadcasting victims' names came from the potential benefit to the community. They mentioned raising awareness of crime, making victimization seem more real, helping people to assess their own risk and allowing people to reach out to each other. Some also saw a benefit in satisfying the public's curiosity.

A couple reasons journalists gave for naming victims seemed to deal more with their concepts of their duties than any immediate benefit to the public. They said victims' names made stories more complete and provided a public record of the crime. However, they could not elaborate and explain why these things were important to the public.

CONCLUSION

As in other studies, most journalists said they decide whether or not to use crime victims' names on a case-by-case basis. However, there still seems to be a fair amount of rule obedience involved in their decision-making. Many have policies to which they give at least some consideration, and most outlined crimes for which they would or wouldn't name victims. While these guidelines are informal, they may be just as influential as formal policies. Philip Meyer says journalists' unwritten rules of behavior often influence them more than formal codes or policies because they are "often unconscious" and "difficult to describe and analyze" and deal with in a reasoned manner.[32]

A certain amount of rule obedience may be necessary in journalism, where decisions sometimes have to be made quickly. If managers can outline rules for their reporters to follow in run-of-the-mill cases, they decrease the overall number of conversations they must have with reporters and can focus on those situations that need a lot of thought. A majority of respondents in this study said they discuss whether or not to name a crime victim with their reporters in regard to a few, exceptional stories.[33] In most cases, they rely on their reporters to know how to deal with victim identification.

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[32] Philip Meyer, *Ethical Journalism* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987), 17.

[33] Twenty-two percent said they discuss it in regard to all stories, and 8 percent said they discuss it in regard to many stories. Seven percent have no discussions, and in one case no discussion was possible because the editor was the entire reporting staff.

Far more important to me are indications that on at least some occasions journalists are engaging in a fairly substantial amount of thought in regard to how they will identify victims in the news. They are willing to consider a variety of factors, including the type of crime, family notification and the victim's age, that may alert them to possible embarrassment or trauma on the part of the victim or survivors. They also are willing to consider the social good, as evidenced by a reluctance to interfere with police investigations or to expose the victim to further threats.

There does seem to be a presumption of publication, however. Respondents were able to give more reasons—and in my opinion better reasons—when asked why they would not name victims of certain crimes than they were when asked why they would name victims of other crimes. This indicates that many probably assume they should include victims' names in stories and, as a result, have engaged in a questioning of standards and motives primarily to justify not naming victims. If one assumes victims' names should be included in stories about crime, there is no real reason to justify that action, and indeed, a noticeable number of respondents relied on pat answers, such as "people want to know," "the public's right to know" and "the victim is dead so people need to know," to justify their actions.

Their responses to the question of why don't they name victims of certain crimes seemed more thoughtful and sensitive. They showed a desire to protect people from further harm, a respect for people's dignity and privacy and a respect for community standards. Many of the phrases respondents used in explaining why they don't name victims of particular crimes mirrored arguments in the literature on naming rape victims. The journalistic community's discussion about the identification of rape victims seems to have sensitized its members to the effect their work has on victims generally. In contrast to other recent studies, this one did not find near unanimity in journalists saying they would not name rape victims, but I think that is also a reflection of continued discussion about the issue. In recent years, more and more journalists have argued that not naming rape victims perpetuates the stigma attached to the crime.

Like Thomason and LaRocque, I think some of journalists' concern about how to identify crime victims stems from a fear of censorship. In particular, I think they are concerned about decreased access to crime reports. Most of the respondents in this study said police had withheld victims' names from their reporters on at least some occasions, and discussions with police were likely to result in a change in policy or practice at news organizations while discussions with other groups of people weren't. My sense is that journalists are willing to self-censor to some degree so that police will not feel the need to censor by restricting access.

Finally, I would like to address the issue of how the discussion about naming crime victims has been framed in communications and legal literature. Often, scholars tend to focus on either the public's right to know or victim's right to privacy or a perceived clash between the two. I don't think this is an accurate portrayal of how journalists approach the issue. Certainly some do, and some toss around the phrase "public's right to know" like some kind of magic formula. But when asked what value a victims' name has for readers or viewers, many respondents gave answers that indicated they were concerned with a need to know as opposed to a right to know.

My sense is that the language of journalists is changing, and perhaps with it, the standards and goals. Many journalists still talk about informing the public, presenting information in a complete and accurate form and fulfilling the public's right to know. These phrases fit into a kind of old-school model of journalism in which journalists' duty was to provide as much information as accurately as possible. What the public did or didn't do with that information was not the journalists' responsibility. But quite a few journalists—at least in this study—seemed concerned with the effects of their work. They talked about the possible effects on victims and the public, and they seemed aware that members of the community, including victims and police, held them responsible for those effects. Their answers implied a recognition of social responsibility. I think the criticism leveled at journalists in recent years may have forced them—or at least some of them—to rethink their purpose and their role in their communities.

TABLES

Table 1: Method of decision making by type of news organization (in percent)

	Weekly newspapers n=39	Daily newspapers n=23	Television stations n=10
Decide on case-by-case basis	87.2	60.9	100
Follow a policy	12.8	39.1	0
Total	100	100	100
$x^2=9.20$, df= 2, $p<.01$			

Table 2: Number of staff members covering crime by type of news organization (in percent)

	Weekly newspaper n=39	Daily newspaper n=23	Television station n=10
One person	51.3	17.4	10
More than one person	48.7	82.6	90
	100	100	100
$x^2=10.46$, df=2, $p<.01$			

Table 3: Policies of news organizations on naming crime victims

Policy	Number of news organizations	Percent of news organizations outlining a policy
Name all victims	2	14.3
Name no victims	4	28.6
Name all except those of sex crimes	4	28.6
Name all except juveniles	1	7.1
Name all except juveniles and sex crime victims	1	7.1
Have a procedure based on the type of crime	2	14.3
	14	100.0

Table 4: Establishment of formal policy by type of news organization (in percent)

	Weekly newspaper n=39	Daily newspaper n=23	Television station n=10
Formal policy	35.9	78.3	30.0
No formal policy	64.1	21.7	70.0
	100	100	100
$x^2=12.00$, df=2, $p<.01$			

Table 5: Crimes in which the victim is always named by number of news organizations following that practice[34]

Type of crime	Number of news organizations n=42	News organizations as percent of those who always name victims of some crimes
All crimes	1	2.3
All crimes except sex crimes (including murder)	4	9.5
All serious crimes/felonies (including murder)	12	28.6
Murder	21	50.0
Property crimes	4	9.5
	42	99.9

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[34] In Tables 5 through 8, percentages may add up to more than 100 because respondents were able to list more than one crime or reason.

Table 6: Most common reasons why journalists always name victims of certain crimes by percent of respondents

Reason for naming victims	Number of news organizations n=42	News organizations as percent of those who always name victims of some crimes
The person is dead. (Given in regard to murder)	12	28.6
The crime is serious.	10	23.8
People want to know.	8	19.0
There is a public right to know.	5	11.9
It's an element of the story.	4	9.5
The crime affects a lot of people. (Given in regard to crimes where a life is taken.)	3	7.1
People may know the victim.	2	4.8
	44	104.7

Table 7: Crimes in which the victim is never named by number of news organizations following that practice

Type of crime[35]	Number of news organizations n=56	News organizations as percent of those who never name victims of some crimes
Sex crimes (including rape and child molestation)	49	87.5
Child abuse	4	7.1
Domestic violence	3	5.4
Suicides	2	3.6
Minor, less serious crimes	3	5.4
	61	109.0

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[35] Ten news organizations, or 17.9 percent, also do not name child victims of any crime.

Table 8: Most common reasons why journalists never name victims of certain crimes by percent of respondents

Reason for not naming victims	Number of news organizations n=56	News organizations as percent of those who never name victims of some crimes
May subject them to social stigma or embarrassment.	27	48.2
Desire to protect them from further physical or emotional harm.	17	30.4
Privacy issue.	12	21.4
Journalistic tradition.	10	17.9
No need for people to know name.	8	14.3
Age of victim.	6	10.7
Naming would violate community standards.	3	5.4
Victims might not report crime if names were published.	2	3.6
	85	151.9

Table 9: Percent of news organizations making changes in their policy or practices by whether or not they discussed naming crime victims with police

	Talked with police	Had not talked with police	n=
Made changes in policy/practices	95.5	4.5	22
Had not made changes in policy/practices	74.4	25.6	43
$\chi^2=4.28$, df=1, $p<.05$			

Table 10: Practice for naming crime victims by degree of thought given to issue by respondents (in percent)

	Journalists considering few factors n=14	Journalists considering an average number of factors n=45	Journalists considering many factors n=9
Will always name victims of some crimes	78.6	62.2	25
No standard rule for naming victims	21.4	37.8	75
	100	100	100
$\chi^2=8.15$, df=2, $p<.05$			

Table 11: Weight respondents place on different factors in deciding whether or not to use victims' names

	Average score on scale of importance (Maximum possible=5; Minimum possible=1)
Whether the victim's family had been told about the crime.	4.31
The kind of crime.	4.08
Whether the victim is a minor.	3.90
Whether the name came from the police or an unofficial source.	3.88
A policy established by your news organization.	3.86
How well-known the victim was in the community.	3.40
Whether the victim was alive.	3.35
Whether the crime was one in a series.	3.03
A request by the victim not to use his/her name.	2.96
Whether a suspect had been arrested.	2.78
Another news organization in the area using the victim's name.	2.13

Table 12: Reasons victims' names add value to news stories by the percent of respondents[36]

	Percent of respondents citing reason
Viewers or readers may know victim.	37.5
Makes the story more complete.	30.6
Makes the victim seem more real, less like a statistic.	20.8
Name satisfies people's curiosity.	15.3
Name helps locate the victim geographically or demographically so people can assess their own risk.	15.3
Name helps raise awareness of crime in the community.	13.9
People may be inspired to reach out and offer support to the victim.	11.1
It provides a public record of the crime, particularly in the case of death.	8.3
	152.8

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[36] Respondents could give an unlimited number of reasons. The number given ranged from zero to five, with an average of 1.63.

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The Daily Newspaper and Audiotex Personals:

A Case Study of Organizational Adoption of Innovation

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The Daily Newspaper and Audiotex Personals:
A Case Study of Organizational Adoption of Innovation

Abstract

The adoption of an innovation is based on it being the best course of action available to solve problems. Audiotex technology is an innovation many daily newspapers have adopted to improve classified advertising revenue. Applying Rogers' organizational adoption of innovation model, this study presents the findings of a case study of a northeastern U.S. newspaper. The findings are important to researchers interested in organizational adoption and to practitioners interested in newspaper adoption of technology.

The Daily Newspaper and Audiotex Personals:

A Case Study of Organizational Adoption of Innovation

Individuals and organizations are frequently confronted with new ideas, products, behaviors, and technologies, i.e. innovations. Innovations have been formally defined as "ideas, practices, or objects that are perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption."[1] Rogers' defines adoption as "a decision to make full use of an innovation as the best course of action available" to solve problems."[2] In the case of daily newspapers, the problem has been maintaining readership and generating revenue. Audiotex technology is an innovation that newspapers have been adopting in growing numbers to improve classified advertising revenue. The addition of this technology to the daily (as opposed to alternative) press represents a unique opportunity to investigate organizational adoption of innovation.

This paper, which is part of a larger study, presents the findings of a case study conducted at a northeastern U.S. daily newspaper to explore the adoption of voice mail technology. The technology was adopted first to support audio enhanced personal advertisements and ultimately to provide additional information to subscribers beyond the printed page. The findings of this study are important to researchers investigating organizational adoption of innovations and to practitioners interested in the process newspapers have gone through in adopting audiotex.

Background

Newspaper organizations have historically been innovation adopters. In the early nineteenth century several innovations made the modern newspaper possible. Developments in the printing process, cheap paper, typography, plate-making, the telegraph, along with the social innovation of a rise in literacy, made the mass circulation press possible.[3]

Along with innovations in the physical production of the newspaper and the ability to produce large numbers of copies, another significant innovation was the adoption of advertising. Since 1833, when Benjamin Day found he could no longer sell his *New York Sun* for six cents a copy, newspapers have relied on advertising support.[4] This support comes from outside commercial enterprises and individuals in the form of retail and classified advertising.

In many ways, the newspaper world of today resembles that of the past. The newspaper business has evolved, changing from a time when it was driven by strong editorial personalities to the market-driven mass medium it is today. Newspapers compete for stories and for readers. However, with the rise in the variety of forms of media, particularly electronic, competition for readers and advertising dollars is at an all-time high. Newspapers, magazines, and television all narrowly target their messages to a particular audience.

Currently, classified advertising contributes 35 percent to newspaper's advertising revenue.[5] During the recent recession newspapers suffered losses in classified advertising in three important categories: automotive, real estate, and help-wanted. Newspapers found themselves in the position of having to redefine themselves. New strategies were sought to defend the $10.8 billion classified advertising base.[6] According to Newspaper Association of America president Cathleen Black, "we are at the beginning of a time when the newspaper, as it is historically viewed, will take on a broader role. It doesn't only have to be a traditional newspaper as we know it."[7]

As a result, many newspapers have adopted the innovations of telephone audiotex, faxes, and online videotext systems to help them compete (not only in hard economic times), to maintain and boost readership, but also to save space and to strengthen community relations. Previous studies have shown that adoption of voice technology grew 200 percent between 1989 and 1993.[8] Nearly one-third of all daily newspapers now supply audiotex services to their readers.[9] Callers can select items of interest from a menu printed in the paper. Once the item of interest is selected, callers, using a touch-tone phone, enter the advertisement's access code and receive information or leave a voice message for the advertiser. In some cases these are 1-800 number calls. In others, the 1-900 number access is billable by the minute with prices ranging from $1 to $2 per minute.

The biggest use of newspaper-based 900 numbers has been for classified advertising categories such as real estate, automotive, and help-wanted personals.[10] Callers can dial up more than news and weather, however. Classified advertisements are "read" by a computerized voice that is capable of providing stock market information, housing loan rates, lottery results, pizza places, jokes, soap opera updates or dating ads. According to Webb, "we are seeing audiotex as an evolution out of people's basic need for information. They don't necessarily take time to sit down with the newspaper in the morning. If you look at the way society is going, audiotex is simply the medium which is going to be more attractive to their lifestyle."[11]

The adoption of new technologies at daily newspapers allows them to remain competitive with other, perhaps more technologically advanced media, such as television and cable. The audiotex voice mail personal has been hailed as the "lifeline that could pull newspapers out of the swamp of lost revenue," and has become the chief money-maker in newspapers' audiotex category.[12]

Newspaper Adoption of Voice Personals

Audiotex is a relatively new technology to the daily paper. Personal advertisements, however, have a long history. In newspapers these ads have historically been found under the heading of "personals" where they have included announcements such as "Found: One Red Pocket

Comb", "To the blonde young lady in the white T-Bird, meet me at Burger City,"[13] or Novena to St. Jude.

No doubt, a few years ago, daily newspapers would not have run the kind of personal ads for dating that we see today. Not only were these ads associated with the alternative press, but there was also a stigma attached to the ads as "too prurient, of value only to a small number of readers, and possessing limited revenue potential." [14] The publisher of the newspaper used in this study described his view of the personals:

> They probably started in magazines even before they got into the alternative newspapers, but there are a lot of things that started in alternative newspapers or other media that perhaps tend to be a little more daring or controversial, but ultimately become perfectly acceptable and find their way into regional and local newspapers. I think a good example is coverage of rock 'n' roll music. When rock 'n' roll came out it was something newspapers didn't take seriously. It was just a fad to appeal to young people. The sort of older conservative adult who ran newspapers and other businesses didn't think this was so much.

Beyond cultural considerations, factors of resistance have included "publisher resistance, editorial disdain or corporate skepticism." [15] Yet the revenue potential, reader service, and entertainment value of these ads has made the adoption lucrative. Just as the use of pulp over rags for paper, color over black and white for impact, or the creation of special section for advertisers all seemed new at the time of introduction, personal advertisements and voice technology are gaining acceptance.

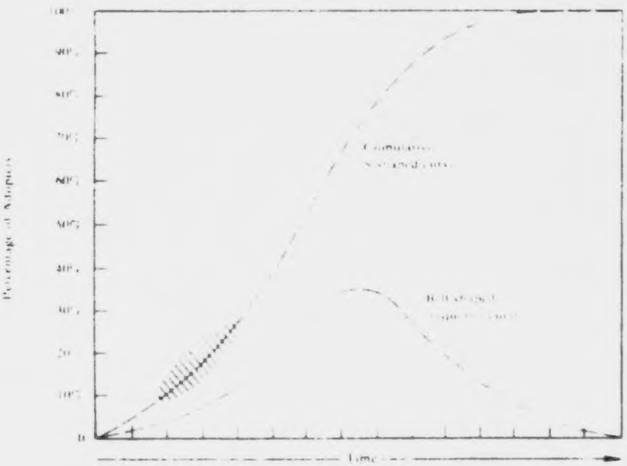
Adoption of Innovation

The field of diffusion research is typically traced to Gabriel Tarde's 1903 Laws of Imitation.[16] Tarde proposed early theories of the spread of innovations through society, suggesting that the study of imitation and diffusion of new social and technological phenomenon was fundamental to understanding social change. Tarde was among the first to suggest that the spread of ideas followed an s-shaped curve. Many academic disciplines have contributed to research on diffusion and adoption. These include studies in cultural anthropology, education, marketing, and communication.[17]

Diffusion of innovations has been the subject of more than 3,500 published studies over the past fifty years. Typically, studies of the adoption of innovations begin with investigations of individual decision makers, such as farmers and medical doctors. The classic study of diffusion research was conducted by Ryan and Gross who studied the diffusion of hybrid seed corn by Iowa farmers. The researchers found that, in the space of four years (1936-1939), two-thirds of the farmers in two communities changed over to the new hybrid seed corn. Commercial channels, such as salesmen, were the most important original sources of knowledge. The four main components of the Ryan and Gross paradigm are: (1) an innovation (2) communicated through certain channels (3) over time (4) among members of social systems.[18]

Adoption is key to understanding the media's role in social change. The model states that innovations spread through society as a result of decisions made by individuals. This accumulation of consensus takes place under specific conditions of awareness, interest, assessment, trial and adoption. Previous studies have shown that the adoption of an innovation follows a normal, bell-shaped curve when plotted over time on a frequency basis. If the cumulative number of adopters is plotted, an s-haped curve results (Figure 1). This s-shaped distribution rises slowly at first when there are few adopters and accelerates to a maximum until half of the individuals in the system have adopted.[19]

Figure 1



The bell-shaped frequency curve and the s-shaped cumulative curve for an adopter distribution

Innovations are not only adopted by individuals, however. Organizations also adopt. Prior to the 1970s there were hundreds of studies of organizational innovativeness. For example, a body of literature explored innovativeness in education,[20] while another group investigated innovativeness in business-oriented organizations.[21] After this period Rogers' began tracing the process of innovation *within* an organization.[22] It is acknowledged that prior studies brought to light characteristics of innovative organizations,[23] however, the individual counterpart is important to understanding overall change. Although behavior in these enterprises is relatively stable, change is ongoing.

According to Weber, bureaucratic organizations are not particularly innovative. There are rules, functional specializations, and a hierarchy of authority.[24] Any adoption of innovation requires rethinking and retooling of the organization, requiring a certain amount of nonconformist thinking. Weber does point out, however, that "the primary source of the superiority of bureaucratic administration lies in the role of technical knowledge which, through the development of modern technology and business methods in the production of goods has become completely indispensable."[25]

Many attempts have been made to define organizations and innovativeness. For example, Daft and Becker state that organizational innovation is the "adoption of a new idea or behavior by an organization."[26] A key distinction being that innovation is similar to change, but is distinguishable by the criterion of newness. "Innovation is the adoption of something new; change is the adoption of something different."[27] Clark and Wilson suggest that the central analytical attribute of an organization is its economy of incentives.[28] So, whatever the particular product, purpose or technology this "inducements-contributions balance must be maintained." Therefore, an innovation is a "fundamental change in a significant number of tasks."[29]

This study applies Rogers' definition of innovation includes the problem-solving nature of an innovation and its meaningfulness to a particular organization. The following model (Figure 2, following page) delineates the components of the internal process of adoption by an organization.[30]

Figure 2

Stages in the Innovation Process in Organizations

Stage in the Innovation Process	Major Activities at Each Stage in The Innovation Process
I. *Initiation:*	All of the information-gathering, conconceptualizing, and planning for the adoption, leading up to the decision to adopt.
1. Agenda-Setting	General organizational problems, which may create a perceived need for an innovation, are defined: the environment is searched for innovations of potential value to the organization.
2. Matching	A problem from the organization's agenda is considered together with an innovation, and the fit between them is planned and designed.
---------------- ----------------------The Decision to Adopt	--
II. *Implementation:*	All of the events, actions, and decisions involved in putting an innovation to use.
3. Redefining/Restructuring	(1) The innovation is modified and re-invented to fit the situation of the particular organization and its perceived problem, and (2) organizational structures directly relevant to the innovation are altered to accommodate the innovation.
4. Clarifying	The relationship between the innovation and the organization is defined more clearly as the innovation is put into full and regular use.
5. Routinizing	The innovation eventually loses its separate identity and becomes an element in the organization's ongoing activities.

Method

A single-case study methodology was used to pose how and why questions about the contemporary phenomenon of newspaper adoption of innovation.[31] According to Schramm, the essence of a case study is "that it tries to illuminate a *decision*, or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result."[32] This series of questions fit perfectly with the nature of the organizational adoption of innovation. In this case, the situation was the adoption of voice mail (audiotex) technology to facilitate personal advertisements.

Several pieces of information from the case study are related to the theoretical model and these pieces are interwoven or "linked" in a process called "pattern matching."[33] The content of the interviews with individuals at the newspaper was examined in search of similarities in the decision-making process as well as personal feelings about the inclusion of the voice personals in the daily paper.

An upstate New York daily newspaper organization was the subject of the study. The newspaper serves a central city of 200,000 and a market area with a population of approximately 600,000. The newspaper, which is the only daily paper in the area, has a morning, evening, and Sunday edition and enjoys circulations of approximately 89,000 mornings, 93,000 evenings and 226,000 Sundays. [34] Personal advertisements have been a shared part of this newspaper since November 199. The ads precede the classified section of the paper and run on Thursday, Friday, and Sunday.

In-depth personal interviews were conducted during the summer of 1993 with the following individuals: the publisher, advertising director, classified manager, and a classified advertising order taker. The interviews were tape recorded for accuracy. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. Informants were assured anonymity.

A combination of close- and open-ended questions were used. Close-ended questions addressed the following areas: when the newspaper began running personal advertisements; staff members involved in the decision process to add voice technology as well as the responses of the advertising and editorial staffs; how the public responded and general questions about the size of the section, methods of advertising placement and response and questions about the success of the adoption. Open-ended questions were employed to probe for details that might not emerge from the structured portion of the interview.

It was predicted that these interviews would reveal behavior that is consistent with the Rogers' organizational adoption of innovation model and thee findings are arranged according to this model (see Figure 1). [35]

Findings

Initiation. According to Rogers, this stage of the adoption process involves all the "information gathering, conceptualizing, and planning for the adoption of an innovation, leading up to the decision to adopt."[36] To adopt audiotex a newspaper goes through a specific process. Management personnel at the newspaper first became aware of voice technology and its use for personal advertisements through associations and conventions. Representatives from participating newspapers from around the United States attend these conferences to share advances, praise the success of their professional peers, meet with representatives of suppliers, and learn of industry changes. According to the classified manager, her newspaper has, traditionally, maintained a posture of waiting, watching, and listening.

> We looked at personals all over the country, how papers were doing it, how it was going and what the reaction of the community was. We talked to a lot of papers, just took a lot of notes on what they were doing, what their success had been.

This manager indicated that decision-makers at the newspaper were cautious about adding the personals via voice technology, " I think we were looking at it for a year before we implemented it. And then it was another year before we expanded into audiotex where we did all the other things that we do now."

Agenda-Setting. At this stage, general organizational problems which may create a perceived need for an innovation are defined. The relevant environment is perused for an innovation which has value to the organization. In this case, the advertising director described the growth of the personals based on knowledge of what other newspapers were doing.

> I know that by going to these conferences at the time we started there were papers in it [audiotex personals] but not a whole lot. In the last two years a lot have. It's easy to see why. Every time you go to a newspaper conference everybody talks about how much money they're making from it and how great it is and that a lot of problems everybody thought would happen did not seem to surface. I mean we worried about everything--will somebody get murdered by somebody they go out with?

The decision to add the voice personals was ultimately made by the publisher, but was instigated by several key individuals. These staff members recommended to the publisher that he add this product in response to several needs. These included the need to increase revenue, to increase readership in general and specifically among the elusive younger audience. The classified manager indicated that

> The publisher was involved, the ad director was involved, and I was involved. A former editor in the newsroom was involved because she was charged with the task of looking into all sorts of telephone applications and is still pursuing that. As we moved ahead and made our final recommendation, then editors were involved to see what it was all about.

The newspaper publisher described how the staff had approached him (as far back as five to seven years) about adding voice enhanced personals.

> The first couple of times that the thought came up I thought, well I'm not sure that readers in more or less conservative [the state] are ready for personals. So I shot down the idea on at least a couple of occasions. Then we started about two and a half years ago. I was talking to some other editors and publishers and found out that the Middletown newspaper had just started running similar ads. I asked what the reaction had been and the publisher said its been getting a lot of attention, we're getting a lot of calls and it seems to be making money.

This process of hearing from other newspapers resulted in the newspaper investigating vendors who would supply the audiotex technology. Again, the publisher commented:

> . . . we went through a routine process of deciding how we were going to do it, and we did it. I think we all felt a little apprehension. What was the reaction going to be? Were there going to be complaints? Was this something that people weren't expecting or would be disappointed to see in their newspaper? We ran it and to this day I have not received a complaint.

Matching. At this stage, the problem is considered along with the innovation and a potential solution and the fit is evaluated. A reality testing of sorts takes place at this stage when the organization embarks on a symbolic trial. This entails the anticipation of the problems that might occur if the innovation were adopted. As indicated it was clear that the newspaper had suffered significant economic losses in the recent recession. There was a dramatic decline in revenue. Although there was talk of meeting the needs of readers, the advertising director pointed out the reason his paper added the personals, "Oh, making money! I mean when you're running a business making money is always in the equation some place. If business was up through the roof we still would have done it."

The publisher, however, did not feel these ads would be a means of boosting traditional advertising categories. He admitted that the paper's revenue had been down, in retail and in classified advertising, but saw personal advertisements and audiotex services as filling another need at the paper, "We saw [the personals] as a way to increase readership, to give readers another reason to look into the paper and an opportunity to create some revenue. It succeeded on both of those."

Staff at the publication also felt there was a social need the newspaper could fill.

> We started talking about the need in the community for people to meet and the tough times people had meeting. Because with people working and the time factor, and maybe they're tired of the bar situation, there really are not that many opportunities to meet. At the same time the telephone technology and newspaper technology were getting to the point where you could provide that in a very easy way. With the 900 charge it became very easy for a newspaper to implement the service. So, those things came together at once.

The advertising director concurred that the decision to adopt the ads and technology involved the newspaper's desire for revenue but also anticipated the public's response:

> I don't think we thought of [this city] as particularly cutting edge, so when some newspapers were getting into it, initially we didn't, but the more we thought about it the more it seemed that it really was a service. Also a service to the readers and offered some good communication for people and that some newspapers were

making some fairly decent revenue from it.

Implementation. At this stage all of the events, considerations, and decisions involved in adopting the innovation are considered. An important consideration before adding the personals was the response of the newspaper staff. Before an innovation can be successfully adopted by an organization, those individuals likely to be involved must also be convinced of the usefulness of it. As a result, there may be a need to modify existing systems and organizational structures related to the innovation.

Redefining/Restructuring. According to the classified manager, the staff had to be sold on the idea of personals.

> We thought it was a good thing. We had to talk to people about what it was, what it was about, because when they first heard personals and 900 numbers they were very turned off by it. The connotation of the phone sex lines, that's what hit them when they heard 900. We explained what we were trying to do, and that it was just a service for singles to *meet* on a confidential basis, that it was actually safer than going on a blind date or meeting someone in a bar.

The publisher pointed out that some staff members were concerned about the seedy image of the ads:

> I think when people realized we could control the ads, what we print, and that we watched very carefully, I think that once people were assured that we could do that, and that we would not take ads from escort services, masquerading as personal ads that were really setting up prostitutes, the splash never came.

The advertising director mentioned resistance on the part of the sales staff who would take the orders, "At first there was a lot of trepidation. Will we be talking to weirdoes?" According to the classified manager, this community reaction was a major concern of the newspaper:

> Our biggest concern was the reaction of the community. The people calling to place the ads were saying, 'this is great!' because they felt secure that here was the newspaper coming out, providing something and they felt this was safe. And it wasn't some other medium, they felt that just the credibility of the newspaper's providing this was a safe environment to be in.

The advertising director pointed out that the newspaper could have launched the ads earlier. However, these concerns with reader reaction and subsequent financial risk contributed to reticence over adding the voice personals.

> I think we were principally concerned about our readership. I'll tell you one of the things that we adopt almost philosophically is that we like to let other people in other places make mistakes with things, and then it's a lot less expensive to find out what they did wrong and then to build upon it, doing it the right way. We saw a couple of papers start out with the personals and just lose their shirts.

During the *restructuring/redefining* stage, "not only is the innovation modified to fit the organization, the structure of the organization may have to be changed to accommodate the innovation."[37]

How the product fits into the newspaper is an important step. According to newspaper management, the classified order takers were given special training in writing up the ads. However, according to one of the order takers, the staff was not trained to deal with the callers. In addition, compensation had not been worked out in advance for this new product.

> We work on a commission basis and for a long time we didn't get any kind of compensation for doing the ads at all, which was a real sore spot. . . since then we've worked out a system where we get paid, I don't really mind it so much anymore.

Not only were these individuals in the position of taking the usual order for advertising space, but were dealing with some unique copy:

> It was a tough assignment. It seemed at first not only did people call to place an ad but they would call and like tell me their life story. They'd be bitter about a past love life and were expecting me to be their counselor. At first it was like kind of emotionally draining and we were getting so many ads, we were just getting bombarded.

This salesperson spoke of feelings on the part of the staff about the nature of the job as well.

> It's an odd way to make a living. That's what my friends tell me anyway. I think there's a stigma. When they find out I do this there's a lot of chuckling. People are very curious about it.

The newspaper's publisher point out that the placement of the personals in a particular part of the paper is important to their success. One reason for placing the personals in the classified section, as opposed to thee entertainment section as many papers have, is that "people are accustomed to going to the classifieds expecting to make a phone call." The advertising director indicated their were decisions made about the physical nature of the personals section:

> There are a lot of decisions to be made in the beginning such as 'do you charge for the ad?' do you want to have it be in a standard part of the paper all the time or not?' One paper came out with their own individual tabloid that they distributed free. I didn't want to do that, firs of all, because it's gonna bring readership to the paper and make the paper more valuable and we put it in the front of classified because I thought it would help classified readership.

Clarifying. At this stage, the relationship between the organization and the innovation is more clearly defined as the innovation is put into use. For the newspaper, clarifying who the audience was for voice-mail personals was important. The classified manager was uncertain on this point, indicating perhaps a need to clarify and readjust the promotion of the personals:

> We haven't done a study on this, but my gut feeling is that the average age is 35 to 40, slightly more men [than women]. Initially we had some misconceptions they [advertisers] would be all kids in heir 20s. It's really not the case. There are a lot of people 35 and up, they have jobs and perhaps they're divorced. Not much of an opportunity to meet people.

The publisher also pointed out that the audience he thought the voice personals would appeal to were not necessarily the same as those the ads ended up reaching:

> I think the typical quick conclusion was that this well help us reach younger readers. As you are well aware newspapers are concerned about readership among 18-35 and we thought this is something really more for younger people and this will help us in that area. As time went on we began to feel this was far from the province of young people.

The newspaper added evening hours to its business schedule for the placement of all classified advertisements, particularly to accommodate the needs of personal advertisers. The advertising director said that people do not call during the day to place ads. Instead, the calls start at about 5:30 p.m. and continue until they close at 8 P.M. Most people also place their ads early in the week.

Routinizing. At this stage the innovation loses its distinctiveness and becomes a commonplace part of the organization's ongoing activities. Discontinuance of the innovation can also occur at this stage. In the case of this daily newspaper, the use of voice technology became a regular part of the paper. Some newspapers rejected voice personals because of the conceptual difficulty of "giving away" space. Although the advertisements are free in most cases to the advertiser, the revenue is reaped in the retrieval of responses on part of the advertiser and to those replying to ads. The classified manager described her paper's strategy to attract more advertisers and respondents:

> We allow people to go up to 10 lines. A lot of papers don't. Maybe they're holding back a bit on the newsprint they use, but that way it also helps people describe themselves a bit, and everyone doesn't sound the same right down the column. I think those are good moves we made right up front, early.

The manager revealed that the space used is not the issue, rather "it's not the space that we need to worry about, it's the minutes that make it work."

Every organization is different and has special considerations. Typical is the need for continual redefinition and restructuring of the organization environment of the innovation. Examples include considerations about the content of the ads and the individuals who run them. For example, many daily newspapers have wrestled with running ads from gays and lesbians. Newspapers that allow these ads, use headings such as "Women seeking . . ." or "Men seeking . . ." The advertising director clarified this point:

> We had set up with the vendor the set of criteria for what we would accept. We decided from the outset not to categorize. We had ads from men and from women. The reason we didn't categorize is that we didn't want to seem prejudicial.

Another post-evaluation issue was the success of the voice technology, did it solve the problem it was adopted for? The classified manager stated the criteria:

> . . . we judge [success] on a couple of things: the size of the feature and the number of minutes we generate. We start about a hundred new ads a week. We run about two pages now, so, for a newspaper in our circulation bracket, that's a lot.

An informant at the publication revealed the following information about the revenue generated at the newspaper by the voice personals, as described in Table 1.

Table 1: Personal Ads Revenue

New ads placed each week	75
New ads placed each month	300
Average length of response per ad	3 minutes
Price per minute	$1.95
Revenue per ad	$108.55
Revenue per month	$33,000
Revenue per year	$390,000

This same informant pointed out that her newspaper has an arrangement with a voice mail vendor which allows the paper to retain 90 percent of the revenue generated from these ads ($351,000).

The advertising director pointed out that reevaluation includes watching what goes on at other newspapers in order to gauge their success:

> I've talked to ad directors at other papers that have these personals and it's like, 'oh, yea, that thing with the phone that somebody does and we make money!' You ask them how they are doing, they don't really know. We track it very carefully. If the minutes drop off we'll change the promotion. To some degree the business part of it is like any other business. There are few things that you can do hands-off and just plug it in and walk away. I think a lot of papers did that.

All of the individuals interviewed had similar points of view about the future of personal advertising and the place of audiotex technology in the newspaper's future. The classified manager point out the recency of the voice services, "all of it has happened within the last ten years, I mean there was *nothing* ten years ago and now there are quite a few, I'm not sure where it's going to fall out." The classified manager was optimistic about that point:

> I think it will stay. I think audiotex will continue to evolve and get even larger. There will be more goods and services that you can get through your newspaper and through your telephone. Now we're looking into fax capabilities where you might have a particular interest in a stock, that we have only room in the newspaper to put one line, but you might want to know that company's portfolio or recent 6 month history and we might be able to provide that for you.

She added that the role of the newspaper is changing, adapting to the needs of the readers

> We only put so much news in the newspaper everyday because only a certain amount fits. But we have all this other stuff available. Far more than we could ever print and get out. We're finding ways to get that information out. Right now we're doing it over the telephone and your listening to it, but at some point we're going to, if not deliver it to you, certainly fax it, send it to you electronically . . . all of this is coming.

Discussion

The individuals interviewed for this study saw the newspaper as an evolving entity in the transmission of information. There is no doubt that the technology of the newsroom is changing. Photographs come over the computer, dates through advertisements. The publisher shared his staff's predictions about the future of the personals and the place of audiotex in the newspaper's tool box:

> I think for the newspapers, audiotex, at least for the foreseeable future, will remain an easy and inexpensive way for people to reach the newspaper. You don't need a computer, you don't need to join CompuServe, all you need now is a touch tone phone and there you go. All for 35 cents.

The findings of this case study suggest that this newspaper proceeded naturally through the stages of organizational adoption of innovation. The newspaper sought solutions to three problems: revenue, readership, and service.

Revenue: The organizational decision was made to find a solution to losses in revenue in classified categories. For example, in the midst of an economic recession, several advertising categories were shrinking. Due to high unemployment, there were fewer job ads. Due to the lack of jobs, mobility and other factors, there were fewer houses being sold, hence fewer real estate ads and people were buying fewer big ticket items such as cars. All of which pointed to the need to find an alternative source of revenue. Voice mail technology provided a means of generating revenue through charges for access to advertisers and respondents. In many cases, other uses were found for voice technology besides the personals.

Readership: A problem of newspapers is the diminishing number of subscribers. This translates into reduced audiences for advertisers. As a result, newspapers have narrowly targeted sections in hopes of attracting additional readers. Efforts to capture the elusive younger audience (18-34 year olds) has motivated many newspapers to add personals to their repertoire of services.[38] There is also competition from other forms of media for all ages of audience.

Service: The newspaper cited an altruistic duty of serving the public. Given changes in the characteristics of modern life, such as limits on free time, the newspaper felt it could step in and help people out with information that goes beyond the printed page.

Audiotex technology provided the means to reach the community.

One of the first applications of audiotex was personal advertising. The case study reveals that the newspaper proceeded through Rogers' stages of the organizational adoption innovation. The findings contribute to the literature and consider media organizations along with the traditional research units of business and schools.

Several limitations to case study research that have been cited in literature are relevant to this study. For example, there is little generalizability, may reflect a subjective bias, and offers no route to reconciliation of contradictory findings. However, case study research is unobtrusive and provides a real-life context for research. It was noted earlier that this paper is part of a larger body of research. This included a survey and content analysis as well as the case study. Therefore, through a triangulation of methods this case study has greater validity than if it were to stand alone without the corroboration of other findings.

Future research could explore, through a multi-case study, newspaper adoption of a variety of forms of new technology. In addition, this research points to the need for investigation of behavioral components of media organizations. Each area of Rogers' model offers a variety of opportunities to further explore organizational adoption. It is likely that there are several innovations that were not adopted, suggesting that factors of resistance research could contribute to our understanding of individuals within a media organization and the organization as a whole.

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"What Content Shows About Topic-Team Performance"

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"What Content Shows About Topic-Team Performance"

In the last several years, newspaper trade and association publications have been full of reports of "restructuring," "reorganization" and "re-engineering."[1] Newspapers have borrowed some of the terminology -- and the ideas -- from business and industry,[2] and applied them to the editorial process.[3] One approach that has been the focus of much discussion but little systematic assessment is the topic team. This study examines the impact of a topic team in coverage of one topic area -- health and science. It uses content analysis both before and after the institution of the topic team to determine whether the newspaper achieved its goals in changing to a team structure.

Background

The team structure contrasts with the traditional newsroom organization, in which higher-level editors supervise section or departmental editors, who, in turn, supervise reporters with sharply defined coverage responsibilities. In the traditional newsroom, decisions about what to cover and how to cover it are often made at higher levels and passed down the chain of command. Traditional departments, such as city, region, business, features and sports, are based on section or geography.

A topic-team newsroom is organized by content areas that often cut across traditional departments. An environment/ecology team, for example, might cover news that had been covered by reporters from the city, state, features and business staffs. Team reporters typically report to a team "leader," instead of an "editor," and, as in other business and industry contexts, much is made of the functional differences reflected in new titles. Leaders are supposed to coach and facilitate rather than manage, and workers to collaborate rather than compete. Teams do not eliminate hierarchy, but they do tend to flatten it. At The (Norfolk)

Virginian-Pilot, for example, the switch to topic teams was accompanied by a shift in newsroom management from seven levels to three.[4] The Tacoma News-Tribune reduced its management levels from four to two.[5]

The explicit motivation for organizational changes such as topic teams is to better serve readers, who, it is believed, are ill-served by the traditional, hierarchical, newsroom. The implicit motivation is to stem the loss of readership that newspapers have suffered in the last several decades and continue to face because other media increasingly compete for readers' attention.

For more than a decade, some scholars and consultants have argued that traditional, bureaucratic, hierarchical forms of organization are ill-suited for the late 20th century economic environment.[6] In theory, teams embrace self-direction: they empower workers and team leaders to make many decisions on their own. Management scholars and consultants say that collaboration and sharing of power help business and industry improve quality and customer service. Teams are designed to embody these ideas, improving performance by giving corporations the flexibility to adjust quickly to rapidly changing market conditions and consumer needs.[7]

Like other organizations, newspapers have created teams in an effort to produce a higher quality product to better serve customers. The Orange County Register, The Minneapolis Star-News, The Portland Oregonian and the Myrtle Beach, S.C., Sun-News are four of dozens of newspapers that have made it clear that they created topic teams with reader -- as customer -- mind.[8]

One could argue that newsroom topic teams are not true teams. Katzenbach and

Smith define a team as: "a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable."[9] Teams are supposed to entail significant shared leadership, and assessment and compensation are to be based on team performance. Skills among newspaper topic-team members tend to be more similar than complementary, and individual performance remains a key element in reporter assessment. But topic teams are certainly more "team-like" than the more rigid beat systems that preceded them.

Newspapers are facing some of the same problems other corporations have experienced in changing to a less rigid hierarchy of work organization. Management resistance to worker empowerment is one such area. Another troublesome area is performance assessment, an area that consultants say is crucial for team success.[10] In companies that make material products, assessment of team performance is not easy, but it can be based on meeting goals in productivity, output, costs, product defects and other traditional indicators. Management consultants Darrel Ray and Howard Bronstein say, "Without goals which can be measured, there is no team."[11] Consultants Michael Hammer and James Champy say that in reengineered companies, "performance is measured by value created."[12]

In the newspaper industry, as in other organizations in which information is the core product, traditional performance indicators are often of dubious use. A reporter who completes a 20-inch story in one hour is not necessarily twice as productive as one who does a 10-inch story in the same time. "Value created" likewise is a fuzzy concept in a newspaper. If anything, a team environment makes such assessment even more difficult. Not only is it difficult to determine what value was created; who created it also is unclear.

Likewise, it is often difficult to assess the overall success of newsroom initiatives, such as a reorganization into teams. If an assessment is done, it is often impressionistic -- newsroom executives agree that a program of change worked (or didn't). Reader impact is an important criterion, but it is difficult and often expensive to determine. Newspapers often use focus groups to study reader reaction to content and other changes, but the results cannot be generalized. Readership surveys can be used, but they are expensive and may pose problems of interpretation.

This study uses newspaper content and play as measures of success, measures that do not address reader reaction but that have been associated with reader attention. In a replication of a 1974 study, McCombs, Mauro and Sok, for example, found that section-front play is the best predictor of readership. They also found that total space devoted to an item was a strong predictor.[13]

An Oregonian team

In the Oregonian's process of reorganizing into newsroom topic teams, the paper created a Health and Science Team[14] and several others in Spring 1994. The rest of the 11 teams organized a few months later and began work in August 1994.

Before the reorganization, a Science and Health Task Force, chaired by senior editor Jack Hart, was charged with studying the paper's coverage and recommending improvements. The task force filed a report that outlined strengths and weaknesses in coverage.[15] Among the criticisms identified were:

> A lack of expertise, particularly in backup reporters;
> Overlooked opportunities for coverage of popular topics, in particular consumer health;
> Inconsistent news judgment, especially in wire stories about research;

Failure to develop beats;
Poor internal communication;
Inadequate story output;
Poor news display.

In summarizing problems with output and news display, the report said:

> "Science, health, medicine, nutrition and fitness are part-time concerns for the majority of the reporters and editors who deal with them. Most of them work in isolation and have no productivity standards for judging their own output. No editor consistently plans a grand strategy encompassing all those fields or acts as a top-level advocate for individual science and health stories.
>
> "As a result, good science and health stories are squeezed out by other concerns, some science and health beats are less productive than they might be, and nobody consistently battles to get important health and science stories onto the section fronts."[16]

Institution of a team structure was designed to solve or contribute to solving these problems. The six reporters selected for full-time health and science beats were expected to work as a team, develop their own beats and help others at the newspaper assess the importance of wire service health and science stories. The team leader was expected to coordinate the reporters, serve as a liaison with other teams and act as an advocate for health and science stories in daily news meetings. The overall intent was to have the team write more and better health and science stories and to have the team stories and other health and science stories displayed more prominently throughout the paper. By these criteria, an example of a particularly successful day for the Health and Science team was the May 4, 1994, edition. In that paper, team-written stories appeared on five of six section fronts and were given the dominant play on three of them.

A key goal of most newsroom re-engineering projects, including teams, is content improvement, so a study of newspaper content should enable one to make some important generalizations about whether the project met that goal. A content study cannot answer all of the key questions, but it can answer some crucial ones, such as:

Did the newspaper increase its overall coverage in a given topic area?
Did coverage increase in targeted areas, such as consumer health?
Did staff-written coverage increase?
Did play of the topic area improve?
Did the topic area coverage take up a greater proportion of space on section fronts--the location of greatest reader attention?
Were topic area stories played more prominently across a wider range of fronts?

Another question -- Did the coverage itself improve? -- is difficult to address, but play is one indicator of quality -- at least from a newsroom perspective. Better stories get better display. A final question--arguably the most important--is, To what degree was the team structure responsible for any improvements? That question can be addressed by examining competing interpretations in light of the content analysis data.

Method

The first content analysis covered a year's time before the institution of the Health and Science team and before Sandra Mims Rowe took over as executive editor and began making organizational changes.[17] It covered the period June 1, 1992, to May 31, 1993. It was designed to provide a baseline picture of the paper's health and science coverage and was used in planning by the Health and Science Task Force. The second content analysis covered a similar period (June 1, 1994, to May 31, 1995), beginning a couple of months after the team was put into place. The two content analyses make it possible to compare health and science coverage and play before and after the institution of the team.

Sample

Each sample contained 28 issues, or four "constructed weeks," over a year's time. In other words, each sample contained four randomly selected Sundays, four Mondays, four

Tuesdays, etc. A constructed week procedure controls for normal, systematic variation in size of paper and amount of content. It prevents oversampling big papers, say Sundays, or papers that have typically large amounts of health or science coverage, such as the day the Science section appears. Constructing weeks, rather than a month, eliminates the possibility of oversampling certain days of the week. (It is possible, for example, to randomly select seven Saturdays as the first seven days of a "constructed month.") In a content study of local stories, Riffe, Aust and Lacy found that one constructed week of issues was sufficient to accurately sample six months' worth of editions. They say that two weeks should allow reliable estimates of a year's worth of issues, a conclusion consistent with earlier work.[18] In this study, four weeks were selected for each year's sample to give a better baseline for analyzing coverage in categories in which coverage is not very heavy.

Coding

The author and a member of the Health and Science Team, reporter Steve Woodward, refined content categories and coded both samples. Deciding whether a story should be considered a health and science story presented little problem; a greater problem was determining which health and science category to place a story in. Six content categories were initially designated based on discussions with the Health and Science task force. Two more were added, and categories were clarified through a monthlong process of coding non-sample issues and discussion between the coders.

The eight story category descriptions follow:

1. Consumer Health

Health issues with a consumer focus, including stories about people getting sick or healthy, treatments, nutrition and diet. The focus of the article is not research.

2. Health Policy

Actions, proposals and issues at any governmental level in which the primary focus is health care policy. Also, court cases dealing with health issues.

3. Medical Research

Stories in which the primary focus is medical/health care research.

4. Science

Stories about scientific issues, breakthroughs, theoretical issues, research (non health-related).

5. Technology

Stories in which the primary focus is on technological advances or the impact of technology.

6. Business of Medicine

Stories in which the primary focus is on health care as a business.

7. Public health

Stories in which the primary focus is on public health issues, locally, statewide, nationally or internationally.

8. Spot medical news

Breaking stories on medical subjects that are not research or policy-oriented.

Stories were coded in only one category, based on the story's dominant theme, and the chief difficulty in refining the coding scheme was overlap. Health Policy and Public Health were troublesome, and there was some initial overlap between Consumer Health and Medical Research. After about 10 trial runs, the coders achieved reliability of 85-90 percent.

In the analysis of samples, each coder was responsible for about two weeks' worth of papers. Four issues (about 15 percent) of each sample were examined separately by both coders to determine reliability. In the 1992-93 sample, agreement was 87 percent on identification as health and science content and 83 percent on categorization. In 1994-95, it was 93 percent on identification and 82 percent on categorization. Agreement on space measurements was greater than 95 percent. Identification of stories as health and science content is a more important consideration than categorization. Stories that had multiple focuses were responsible for the lower level of agreement on categories.

Coders included any health and science story in the paper greater than 4 column inches. This decision eliminated short announcement items. Coders also included the standing Science page Research-in-Brief feature. This column typically contains four items, which were coded as separate items, even though they sometimes were less than 4 inches long. The coders did not include editorial or op-ed pieces or Dear Abby-type advice columns. Other syndicated columns that dealt with counseling or relationships were coded as Consumer Health.

Coders also indicated source of story (staff, wire or syndicate). Staff was further divided into full-time, correspondent and contributor, based on the story credit line. The analysis included story measurements in column inches of text, photo and graphic measurements in square inches, and "total space." Total space is a measure in square inches of all of the space taken up by a story, headline and any other display type and art. This measurement, which has been used in a number of newspaper content analyses,[19] is useful for making overall coverage comparisons, particularly on section fronts. For stories that jumped, column inches and total space were further broken down by section front vs. inside. Column inches gives perhaps the best picture of story output. Total space on fronts gives the best picture of front-page play.

Results

Comparison of the 1992-93 and 1994-95 data indicate substantial improvement in the amount and section-front play of health and science stories.

Scope of coverage

The Oregonian devoted considerably more stories and space to health and science news in the year after the team began its work. In the 1992-93 sample, 177 health and science stories were coded for the four weeks selected. In 1994-95, 259 stories were coded for a similar constructed four-week sample, a 46 percent increase. The increase in column inches of copy was 36 percent and total space (stories, photos, graphics, headlines) was 50 percent. The greatest percentage increases -- more than 130 -- was in coverage produced by full-time staff and in space devoted to photos (Figure 1). Table 1 shows the same coverage increases calculated as mean differences in coverage per day. Most differences were significant.

Health and science categories

Figure 2 compares column inches of stories by category. The sharpest increases in column inches were in health policy, medical business, spot medical and public health. Stories about the Clinton health plan probably account for much of the increase in policy stories in 1994-95. The decrease in the Technology category may be an anomaly; in the '92-93 sample, there were several long technology stories. Few Technology stories were found in either sample. There were more stories in all categories except Technology in 1994-95.

Source of stories.

The number of staff-written and wire stories increased substantially. The '94-'95 sample included 44 more staff-written and 38 more wire stories. The number of syndicated stories (11) did not change.

There was a sharp increase in column inches of "staff" copy, which includes full-time, correspondent and contributor copy (Figure 3). There was a much smaller increase in column inches of wire, despite the sizable increase in number of wire stories.

The proportion of copy produced by full-time staff increased sharply compared with contributor and correspondent copy (Figure 4). About half of the full-time staff copy was stories were coded for the four weeks selected. In 1994-95, 259 stories were coded for a similar constructed four-week sample, a 46 percent increase. The increase in column inches of copy was 36 percent and total space (stories, photos, graphics, headlines) was 50 percent. The greatest percentage increases -- more than 130 -- was in coverage produced by full-time staff and in space devoted to photos (Figure 1). Table 1 shows the same coverage increases calculated as mean differences in coverage per day.

Health and science categories

Figure 2 compares column inches of stories by category. The sharpest increases in column inches were in health policy, medical business, spot medical and public health. Stories about the Clinton health plan probably account for much of the increase in policy stories in 1994-95. The decrease in the Technology category may be an anomaly; in the '92-93 sample, there were several long technology stories. Few Technology stories were found in either sample. There were more stories in all categories except Technology in 1994-95.

Source of stories.

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The proportion of copy produced by full-time staff increased sharply compared with contributor and correspondent copy (Figure 4). About half of the full-time staff copy was written by team members; about half was written by staffers outside of the team. (This result is discussed below.) Consumer Health column inches shifted from predominantly wire (425 to 321) in 1992-93 to predominantly staff-written (597-222) in 1994-95.

Section-front play

More health and science stories appeared on section fronts in 1994-95 (Figure 5), and considerably more section-front space was devoted to health and science stories, particularly on A1 and the Metro front (Figure 6). Tables 2 and 3 show the change in distribution of stories and space outside of the science section; chi square is significant for both.[20]

There was a substantial increase in staff copy on section fronts, no increase in wire copy and a slight drop in syndicated copy (Figure 7). Total space on section fronts shows a much sharper increase in staff-generated material than the increase indicated by column inches of text (Figure 8). Much of this increase was in space devoted to photos.

The increase in health and science content on fronts was broad-based, across all categories except science and technology (Figure 9). Consumer Health stories in particular were spread throughout the paper more in 1994-95. Consumer Health appeared primarily in Living and Food sections in 1992-93. Consumer Health often appeared in Metro and Science sections in 1994-95.

Health and science stories were accompanied by more and slightly larger photos and by more and considerably smaller graphics in 1994-95 (Figure 10).

Discussion

Comparisons of the samples clearly indicate that many of the newspaper's goals in shifting to a health and science team were met. Coverage increased, staff coverage increased sharply and play improved in terms of both space on section fronts and distribution of stories across section fronts. To what degree is the reorganization responsible for these improvements? Are there other possible explanations?

Increase in column inches

Though a column-inch count is not necessarily the best measurement of performance, it is one indicator, and one would expect it to be roughly consistent over time unless staff size changes significantly. A slight increase in staff-generated copy should be expected simply because the full-time equivalent staff resources (FTE) devoted to health and science coverage increased slightly when the team was instituted.

According to the task force report, FTE for reporters before the team was begun was estimated at 5.8, divided among 12 staff members. Before the change, only two of these staff members had spent all of their time on health and science coverage. Afterward, team reporting FTE was about 6. According to several team members, intern resources available for health and science coverage increased somewhat, though not substantially. With the team structure, interns were attached to the team rather than to the city desk and could focus on health and science coverage. An editorial assistant attached part-time to the health and science team also contributed some copy, such as the "Health Calendar," a new feature instituted by the team.

It is difficult to determine changes in FTE devoted to editing based on the task force estimates. Editing FTE, including copyediting and wire editing, was estimated at 2.8 in the task force report and was spread across several departments. With the team structure, many editing duties were shifted to team leaders. After the change, team leaders constituted about

1.5 FTE, and copyediting remained about the same.

The increases in amount of coverage indicated by the content analyses, particularly in stories written by full-time staff members, appear to be considerably greater than the slight FTE increase would suggest.

Non-team staff stories

Slightly fewer than half of the stories coded as "full-time staff" were written by staff members outside the team. These stories ranged widely across categories. Examples were a story on killer whale research, a story about health policy issues involving Californians who moved to Oregon, a large package about adult foster care issues, a story about antisocial traits and stories about doctor-assisted suicide, which was a major issue in Oregon.

The '94-95 analysis included any stories whose main focus fit into any of the eight health and science categories. The categories in the analysis are relatively broad--they are likely to capture stories not done by team members, particularly in areas such as education, politics and lifestyle, which often overlap with health and science. The same criteria were used for the 1992-93 sample, and it is likely that many of the stories coded as health and science in 1992-93 also were done by staff members other than those whose beats were primarily health and science. However, because there was no team as such in 1992-93 and because health and science stories were only part of the responsibility of most writers covering those areas, it is virtually impossible to determine which health and science stories were done by writers on a health and science "clock" and which weren't.[21]

Topic teams were still a fairly new phenomenon at The Oregonian during the period covered by the second analysis, and there was some unclarity (and negotiation) over what stories should be done by which team. In a "newsroom without walls," such as The Oregonian was creating, all teams were expected to help out other teams on related stories. According to interviews, health and science team members did consulted with other staff reporters on some of the non-team stories. On other stories, the health and science team was not aware of non-team stories that had health and science content until they appeared in the paper. Again, such "surprises" are likely in any new system.[22]

Though team members only wrote about half the content coded as health and science, they did play a role in much of the rest of the coverage, and the half they did write itself exceeded the amount written in 1992-93. The number of team-written stories in the 1994-95 sample (50) exceeded the number of all staff-written stories in the '92-93 sample (36), and, as Figure 4 shows, team-produced column inches (865) exceeded the amount of staff-produced health and science column inches in the 1992-93 sample (667). And, overall, increasing the amount of health and science content in the paper -- from whatever source -- was one goal of the restructuring.

A zero-sum game?

There was no substantial increase in news hole in the Oregonian in 1994-95, so the increase in amount of health and science coverage must have come at the expense of other types of coverage. News hole notwithstanding, health and science captured a much greater proportion of space on section fronts, and that increase clearly came at the expense of other coverage. An analysis of the sort done here cannot determine what lost so health and science could win; all coverage would have to be analyzed.

The implications are interesting, though. With other things held equal (particularly news hole), all topic teams could not show the same sort of increase in coverage and play that health and science has shown -- unless certain traditional areas of coverage were not included in the responsibilities of *any* team. Does the institution of topic teams across the board necessarily mean that some areas traditionally covered will receive less or no coverage? Is there enough expendable material to dump out of the paper or off section fronts to make way for subjects that the newspaper wants to emphasize?

According to senior editor Hart, the overall shift to topic teams also was a shift to a different set of news values. Many stories previously covered and sometimes played on section fronts, such as small-scale legislative "process" stories and wire stories on politics in other states, no longer appear in the paper. Moreover, those that did appear had to meet a higher standard to make it onto section fronts. A further overall editing change--the policy of presenting enough information through graphics and text devices so that readers could capture the gist of a story from what appears on the front--also may be responsible for some of the increase in section-front space devoted to health and science coverage. Even so, it does not seem likely that all teams could show 40-50 percent increases in story count and space. There would not be that much expendable traditional coverage.

Are certain topics more likely than others to show increases in coverage and play through a team organization? Or might such increases occur only in cases in which the team is instituted as a means of solving existing deficiencies in coverage and play? Might such increases have to do with the degree of prior fragmentation of reporting and editing staff? The task force report did indicate that science and technology were among the paper's "coverage stepchildren." This analysis cannot answer such questions, but they are worth posing and are worth further study.

New coverage priorities

Might part of the increase in coverage, particularly the increase in play, relate to the health and science team's position as one of the first teams started at the newspaper? There was considerable interest in that team among reporters, editors and designers as well as interest among news executives in the team's success. New coverage priorities can lead to increased coverage with or without a new form of organization, and some of the increase found here, particularly in play, might be attributable to those new priorities.

On the other hand, the degree, scope and continuity of improvement suggest that other factors, such as the shift to a team structure, contributed substantially. One goal of the team approach, for example, was to have a high-level advocate (a team leader) available to make the case for good play. Based on the results of the analysis, it seems fair to conclude that it worked. Interviews with team members and editors support that conclusion.

Conclusion

A content analysis of this sort cannot address all important questions about the success of a topic team, but it can offer evidence that the shift to a topic team achieved some key goals. Such discussion is necessarily a bit speculative. A content study analyzing a real-world experiment cannot control for the range of potential explanations of change. The results do, however, provide some strong evidence that the shift to a topic team led to substantial improvements in health and science coverage and play. They cannot speak to some issues, such as quality of coverage, other than indirectly. By inference, for example, one can conclude that more front-page coverage suggests improved quality overall.

Anecdotal evidence from The Oregonian and from The Philadelphia Inquirer, another large paper that created a health and science team, suggests that the change is good for morale.[23] The sharpness of the increase seen in coverage and play of health and science topics in The Oregonian indicate that what is good for staff morale is also good for the paper.

This study focuses on the performance of one team, a limitation, though a necessary one. Examination of one team is a prudent first step in a broader analysis of an overall shift to teams. The changeover of an entire newsroom to teams often corresponds with policy changes in coverage and play. Teams often are designed to extend the scope of coverage in certain areas and reduce (or maintain) the scope in other areas.[24] One team doesn't operate in a vacuum, but it is easier to assess whether the organizational change led to specific goals when performance in one topic area is isolated. Such an approach should offer, at the least, a model to look at teams of a similar nature, and it could provide a method for assessing the success of other teams.

Assessing the value of topic teams is important to both the newspaper industry and to the readers whom the industry attempts to serve. Because topic teams represent a realignment of scarce newsroom resources, a decision to form teams may have a substantial impact on the quality of the newspaper's editorial content. Content, in turn, reflects a newspaper's commitment to meeting its social responsibilities. Quality of news coverage is based on a number of factors, such as the staff experience and commitment of resources. One of the most important of these considerations--and perhaps the least studied--is how newspapers organize and allocate the resources they do have available. This issue grows in importance as newspapers face increasing pressures to downsize.

1. Raleigh Mann, "Restructuring Adds to Stress on Desks -- But Help is at Hand," The American Editor, November 1995, p. 5-7; Rebecca Ross Albers, "New-Age Newsrooms," presstime, April 1995, p. 31-35; Tim McGuire, "Sharing the Excitement of Newspaper Change," ASNE Bulletin, October 1994, 5-23; Tom Koenninger, "Newsroom Darwinism," ASNE Bulletin, September 1993, 5-13; Buck Ryan, "Editing Takes on a New Look," Quill, March 1993, 18-24; Betty Wells, "Challenges of the 1990s Are Reshaping Traditional Newsroom Structures," ASNE Bulletin, December 1992, 4-11.

2. See, for example, Michael Hammer and James Champy, Reengineering the Corporation: A Manifesto for the Business Revolution, (New York: HarperBusiness), 1993; Jon R. Katzenbach and Douglas K. Smith, The Wisdom of Teams, (Boston: Harvard Business School Press), 1993; Marshall Sashkin and Kenneth J. Kiser, Putting Total Quality Management to Work, (San Francisco: Berrett-Kohler), 1993.

3. Ann Maxwell, "So You Think It's Time for a Change," ASNE Bulletin, September 1993, 10-13; Tony Case, "Total Quality Management," Editor & Publisher, May 9, 1992, 14; Koenninger.

4. Cole Campbell, "New Mission Statement," ASNE Bulletin, Oct.1994, p. 22.

5. Art Popham, "Reconfigured Newsroom Should Allow More Agile Decision-making," Tacoma News-Tribune, Sept. 3, 1995, Page B-1.

6. See, for example, Michael Piore and Charles Sabel, The Second Industrial Divide, (New York: Basic) 1984; Katzenbach and Smith, Hammer and Champy.

7. Katzenbach and Smith; Thomas A. Kayser, Building Team Power, (Burr Ridge, Ill.: Irwin), 1994; Hammer and Champy.

8. See McGuire, Albers and Koenninger.

9. Katzenbach and Smith, p. 45.

10. Jon R. Katzenbach and Douglas K. Smith, "The Discipline of Teams," Harvard Business Review, March-April, 1993, 111-120.

11. Darrel Ray and Howard Bronstein, Teaming Up, (New York: McGraw-Hill), p. 143.

12. Hammer and Champy, p. 74.

13. Maxwell E. McCombs, John B. Mauro and Jinon Sok, "Predicting Readership from Content Characteristics," Newspaper Research Journal, Fall 1988, 25-30.

14. The team is now known as "Health, Medicine and Science," a title that better reflects its focus.

15. "Covering Science and Health," a report of The Oregonian's Science and Health Task Force, Dec. 15, 1993.

16. "Covering Health and Science," p. 4.

17. The changes included teams in a newsroom-without-walls organization and changes in staffing of suburban bureaus.

18. Daniel Riffe, Charles F. Aust and Stephen R. Lacy, "The Effectiveness of Random, Consecutive Day and Constructed Week Sampling in Newspaper Content Analysis," Journalism Quarterly, Spring 1993, 133-139.

19. For example, McCombs, Mauro and Son; Stephen Lacy, Ardyth B. Sohn and Lowndes F. Stephens, "Suburban News Coverage: A Content Analysis of Metropolitan and Suburban Papers in Denver and Detroit," Newspaper Research Journal, Spring 1989, 39-50.

20. The once-a-week Science section front is not included in the calculation because no substantive change in story count or space is possible barring a redesign of the page.

21. Health and science team members also were asked to do "outside" work on occasion, helping out on breaking stories or other projects.

22. A team-leaders' morning meeting was instituted to improve communication among teams, and a team coordinator position was established in early 1996 in part to address this issue.

23. Interviews with several current or former members of The Oregonian's and the Philadelphia Inquirer's health, medicine and science teams. Also, "Covering Science and Health," p. 9.

24. For example, when the Tacoma News-Tribune shifted to a team structure, it rearranged its staff to create seven new local news beats and changed its proportion of front-page news from 60-40 national-local to 60-40 local-national. Popham, "Reconfigured Newsroom." The Grand Forks Herald, a medium-size circulation daily in North Dakota, divided its staff members into eight teams in 1993 but by 1995 was thinking of larger, less-focused teams. The York Daily Record, a Pennsylvania paper of similar size, divided its staff into four beat "clusters." Albers, "New Age Newsrooms."

Figure 1

Percentage increases in coverage from 1992-93 to 1994-95

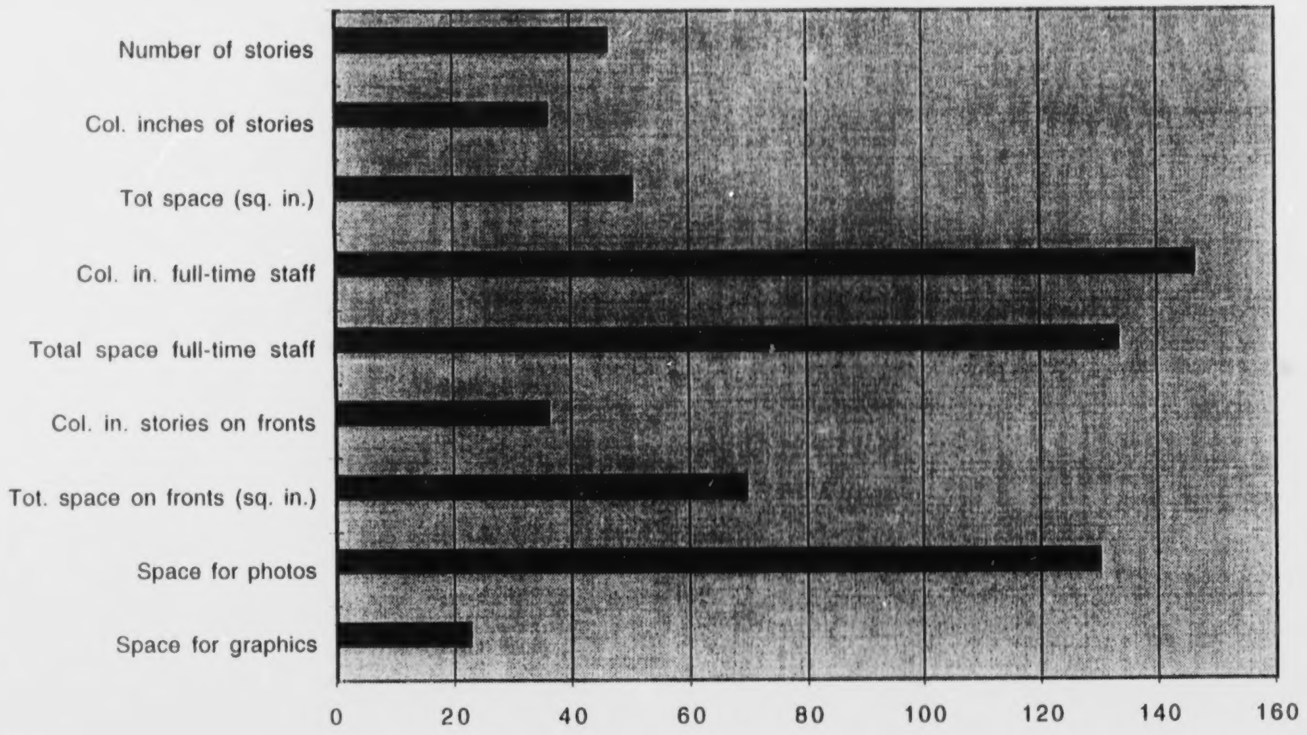


Table 1

Mean differences in coverage per day

	1992-93	1994-95	t*	p**
Number of stories	6.3	9.3	2.51	.006
Column inches of stories	103.0	127.6	1.51	.068
Total space (sq. in.)	348.0	480.0	1.79	.039
Col. in. by full-time staff	23.8	58.5	3.17	.001
Total space full-time staff	108.7	253.4	2.53	.007
Col. in stories on fronts	13.8	17.7	1.03	.154
Total space on fronts	29.5	46.7	2.27	.013
Total space (photos)	36.6	80.7	2.26	.014
Total space (graphics)	34.7	41.1	.39	.348

* based on 28-day samples in 1992-93 and 1994-95.

** one-tailed.

Figure 2

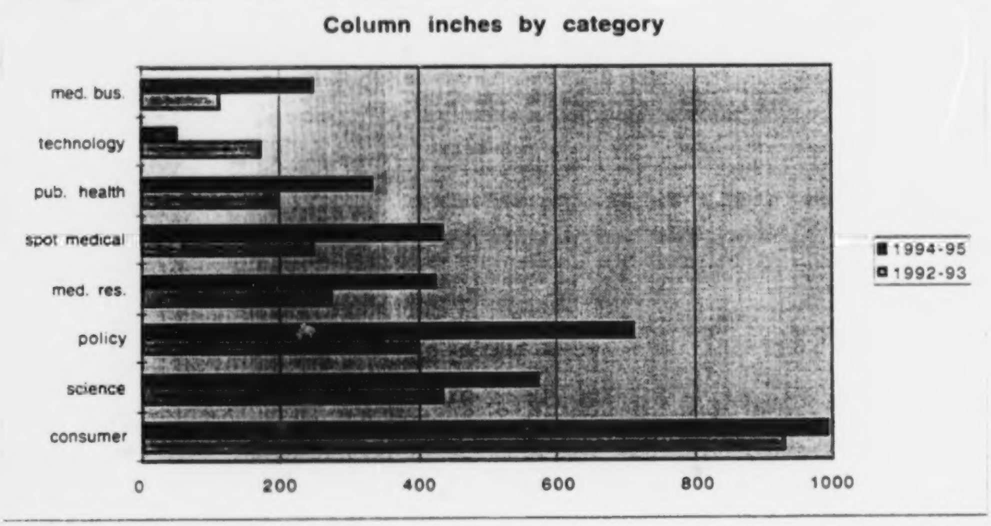


Figure 3

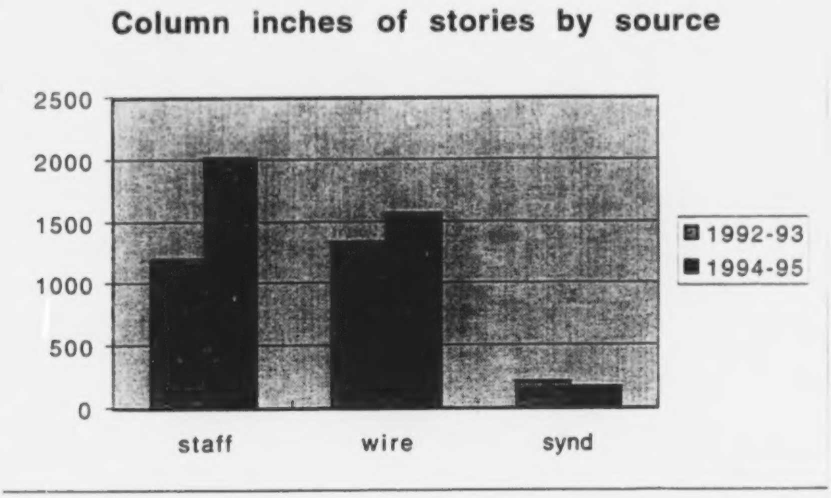


Figure 4

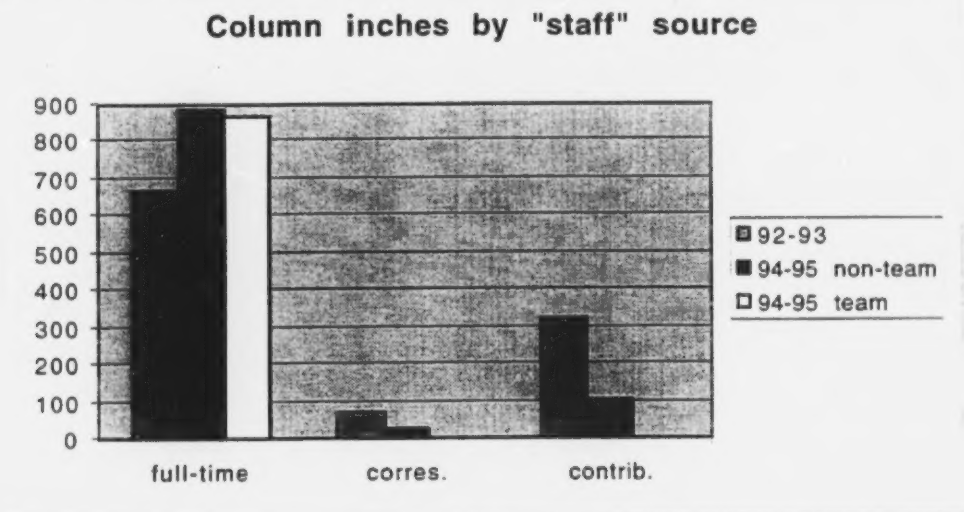
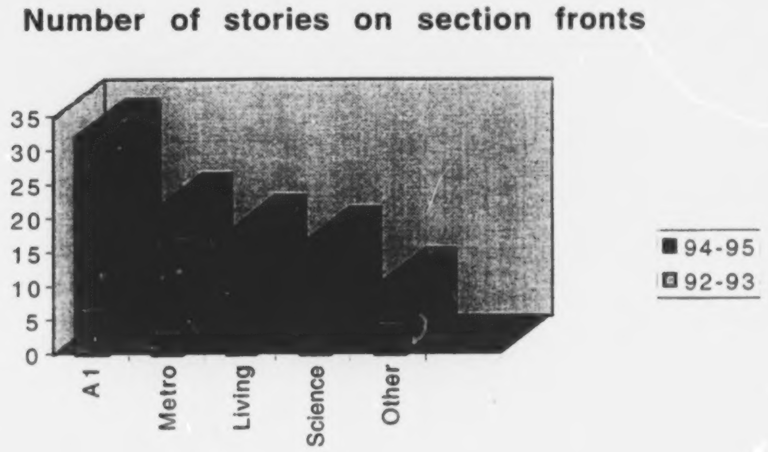


Figure 5



In the 1992-93 sample, **34** health and science stories appeared on section fronts. In the 1994-95 sample, **63** health and science stories appeared on section fronts. "Research Notebook" items, which appear on the Science front, are not included in this chart. In 1994-95, health and science stories were more likely to appear on A1 and on the metro front than in 1992-93.

Table 2

Number of stories on non-science section fronts

	'92-'93	'94-'95
A1	7	25
Metro	4	17
Living	10	8
Other *	5	5
	34	63

* (Business, Food, Sports)
Chi square= 9.19, p=.026

Figure 6

Total space on fronts by section

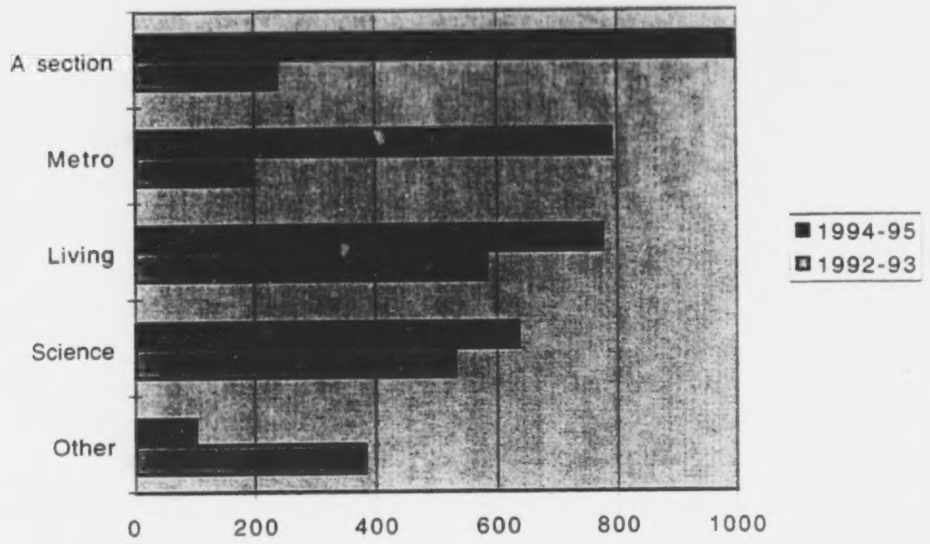


Table 3

Total space on non-science section fronts

	'92-'93	'94-'95
A1	237	995
Metro	192	789
Living	583	774
Other *	380	98
	1392	2656

* (Business, Food, Sports)
Chi square = 696.1, p<. 00000

Figure 7

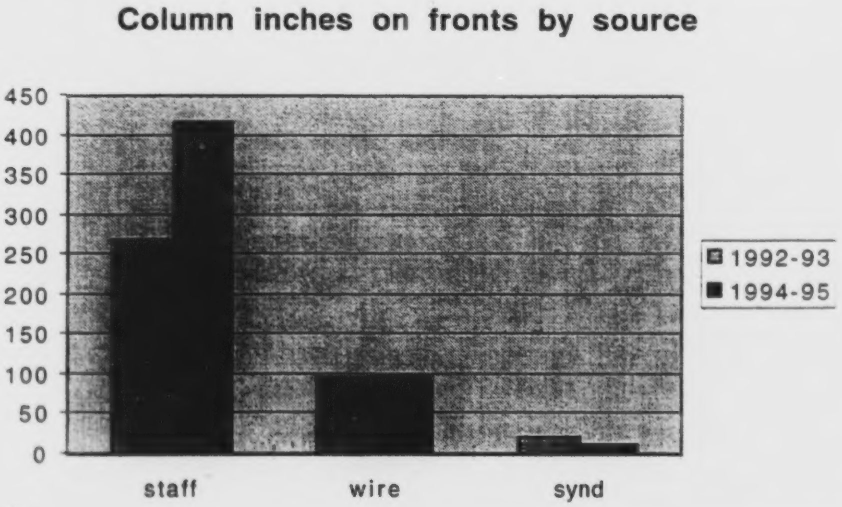


Figure 8

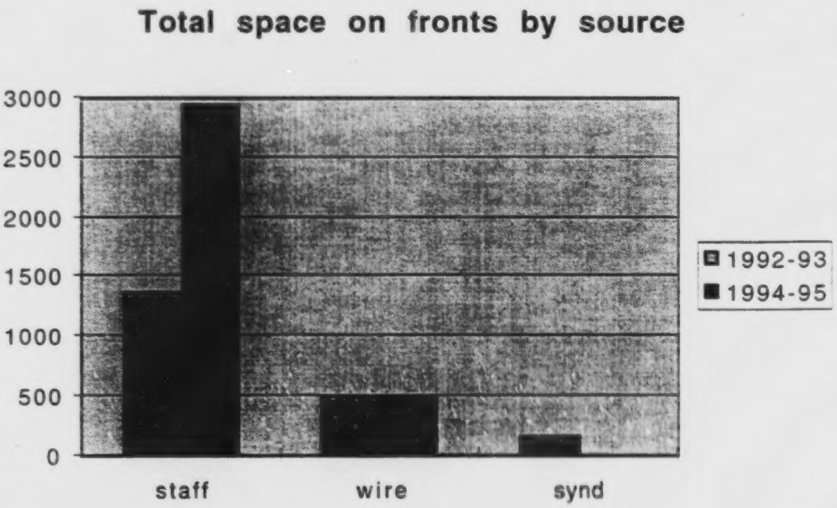
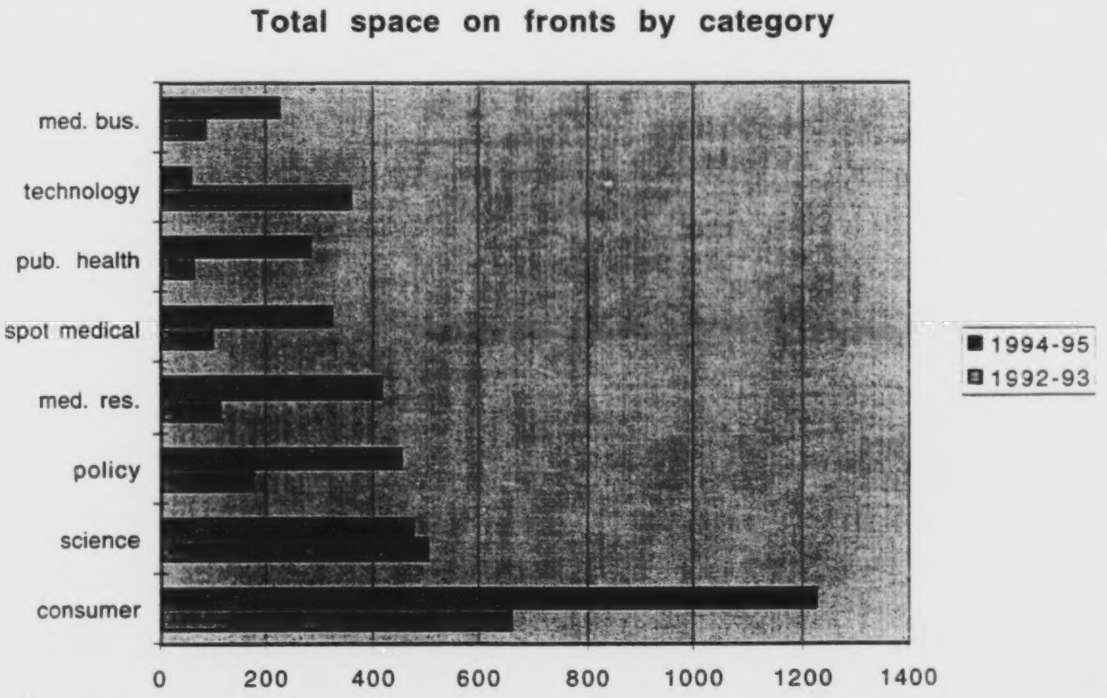
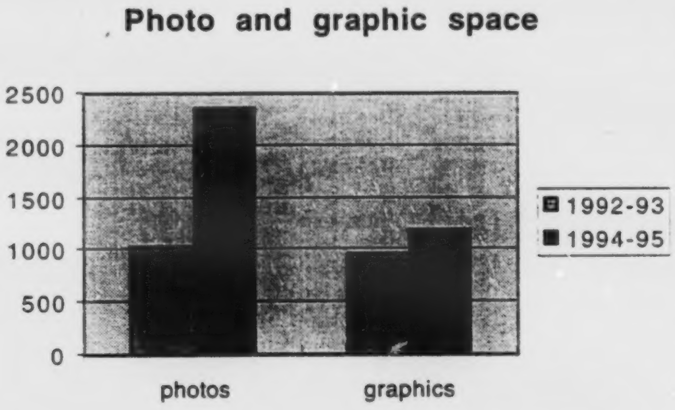


Figure 9



Consumer Health coverage (stories, photos, graphics) accounted for a large percentage of the increase in space on all section fronts, particularly on Metro.

Figure 10



HAVE YOU HEARD THE NEWS?

Newspaper Journalists Consider Audiotex and Other New Media Forms

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ABSTRACT

HAVE YOU HEARD THE NEWS?
Newspaper Journalists Consider Audiotex and Other New Media Forms

Although newspapers only recently have begun leaping online in great numbers, many papers have provided telephone-based audiotex services for several years. This study looks at the sentiment within a newsroom concerning the effects of alternative delivery mechanisms on the role and job of the journalist. The findings indicate that few reporters and editors see new media technologies as having much to do with them at all ... though perhaps they should.

HAVE YOU HEARD THE NEWS?

Newspaper Journalists Consider Audiotex and Other New Media Forms

Within the past year, the trickle of newspapers dipping their toes into the murky waters of online delivery of information has become a steady stream -- and flood warnings have been issued for the months ahead. Current estimates are that more than 450 U.S. papers now have computer-based services either up and running or in development. That number compares to 20 operational online newspaper services at the end of 1993, about 100 a year later -- and an anticipated 1,500 to 2,000 by the end of 1996 (Outing, 1996).

But hundreds of newspapers large and small HAVE been exploring alternative delivery methods for longer than those figures suggest. Most began in the early 1990s with a technology that offered a cheap and easy way to repackage information already prepared for the traditional paper (Kamerer and Bergen, 1995). They began with the telephone. "Audiotex is attempting to demonstrate how newspapers can extend the traditional printed page to voice and stake out the daily paper as the principal information provider of a community," the manager of the Cedar Rapids (IA) Gazette's audiotex service explained several years ago. "The Gazette is alive and well because of enhancements like audiotex and other innovations. We are determined to ward off the wolves -- television, radio, cable, direct mail and others -- all prowling the countryside, ready to devour us" (Debth, 1992, 19).

Newspaper executives now recognize, if they haven't all along, that audiotex is a transitional medium, a relatively inexpensive and unintimidating way to learn about different methods of getting material to readers and receiving it from them. Audiotex services, in which people use a touch-tone phone to retrieve and provide information, range from glorified voice mail to creative attempts to capitalize on newfound sound and interactive capabilities. Audiotex has helped train newspapers as entities and their staffers as individual journalists for the future.

Or has it?

This paper reports the findings of a case study, conducted at a Midwestern metro newspaper that has offered an audiotex service since 1991 and -- at the time of the study in the summer of 1995 -- was preparing to launch a computer-based service. The study's purpose was to explore what metro reporters and editors, the print journalists directly involved in the production of local news, think about changes in the medium through which they provide information to their readers. Although a number of newspapers were studied, this one (which will be called the Sun here, with a SunDial audiotex service and a planned SunSpot online product) was especially interesting because of its history with audiotex, as well as its philosophy of positioning the online "shop" within the main newsroom in an effort to integrate the two products. The study was guided by two related research questions directed toward the print journalists: "What do I do as a newspaper reporter or editor? And how is that role -- including the skills and values I bring to my job and career -- affected by imminent, or ongoing, technological changes in the way the stories I write or edit reach my audience?"

To address those questions, interviews were conducted with 27 Sun journalists. All fell into the category described by Lindlof (1995) as "respondent interviews," in which open-ended responses are elicited to a series of directive questions. The interviewees were seven metro editors, including various deputy editors and bureau chiefs; 14 beat and general-assignment reporters on the metro desk; two higher-level news executives, who were beyond the primary focus of the study but offered insight into management philosophy regarding the new delivery mechanisms and their connection to the print product; and four people who worked in the paper's Electronic Media department, including one who served as a "liaison" to the metro desk, working alongside the editors to keep the beta-test version of the online service updated. Interviews with all but one metro editor and one reporter were tape-recorded (logistical constraints, including the need to conduct one of the interviews by phone, prevented the creation of those two tapes), and the taped interviews were subsequently transcribed and coded. For interviews that were not taped, transcriptions were made from hand-written notes.

Here is what was learned about both audiotex and online media.

INTEGRATION AND SEGREGATION

At the time of this study, the Sun had been providing an audiotex service for close to four years and testing a new online service for several months. The editorial staff of the Electronic Media department was stationed in a corner of the main newsroom. Representatives attended all the daily budget meetings. In addition, each editorial department desk had its own liaison, who worked side by side with editors on the desk to which he or she was assigned rather than in the back corner. In other words, the Sun had set up a physical and organizational structure that not only allowed but encouraged close cooperation and integration among the people producing the "new" and "old" media products.

Conceptual integration, however, was another matter.

Sun journalists almost uniformly reported that the interactive content forms had little or no effect on them. Many said they rarely used SunDial, personally or professionally, and most had virtually no dealings with SunSpot. The barriers to the online service were at least partly technical and logistical in nature: Reporters and editors use a dedicated computer system, with access to the Internet or online databases only in the library (on a separate floor) or through a few selected machines at the fringes of the newsroom. But their attitude toward SunDial, which requires only a telephone to access, is probably best interpreted as simple lack of interest. When pressed, they are quite willing to think about it from a variety of angles. But left to their own devices, it's clearly not a major topic of concern or conversation. It's a "non-geek newsroom," in the rather rueful words of an online staffer. And rather determinedly so.

"I think most of the reporters still consider it a little feature, a little side thing that the paper does," one reporter said. "We don't talk about it much."

"It's not really a matter of newsroom discussion," one of his editors confirmed. "There's no kind of attempt to change the culture and get people thinking consciously about this."

"We still think of [SunDial and SunSpot] as an afterthought," said another editor.

Why, after four years, is that so?

Perhaps because of the way reporters (and their editors) define their roles and their jobs. They see themselves primarily as people who gather information and make sense of it by turning it into a story. Once that process is completed, the reporter reads the story in the paper the next day just like everyone else, albeit with perhaps a bit more interest than the average page turner. But by then, his or her job as a gatherer and shaper of information is long done. If someone else wants to read the finished story into a tape recorder and let people dial a phone number to hear it, that's OK. Why not? If someone wants to call it up on a computer screen, that's OK, too (as long as they don't mess it up). In other words, people who see themselves as reporters and writers have little interest in new media technologies because they perceive them as having little to do with either reporting or writing. "The bottom line, it's still what I write. It's still the interviews that I conduct, and the writing that I do. That's not changing," one reporter explained. "All it is, is another way to convey what I do."

And "what I do" isn't the same as "what they do" on the online side. Processing copy is a long way from gathering information and putting it into understandable words; it's "not my vision of journalism," one editor said. "I don't think they shape any stories," agreed a long-time reporter who recently had become an editor. "They just take what we produce for them and market it, or promulgate it." Even when the SunDial staffers do go out and gather information, it's not the same as when WE go out and gather information. "They take tape recorders to meetings to get quotes on tape that they then play," another reporter said. "Which I think clerks can do. I don't think you need to have a journalist's background to do that kind of thing."

Others stopped short of categorizing online staffers as a lesser breed of journalist, possibly because many had recently moved from jobs in the Sun newsroom. These were colleagues and co-workers, not what an editor called "some techno-ogre person." "The best thing about what's happened here is that the people who went over to the electronic side ... were all fairly well-respected in the newsroom," a reporter said. "I don't think they've done anything, that I know of yet, to abuse that." A few of the print journalists also recognized -- when they stopped to think about it -- that some of the same skills WERE important, even vital. Follow one reporter's thought process as she considered whether what the online staffers were doing was a form of journalism:

> They're not real reporters. I mean, to me, you know, either you're a reporter or you're not. I mean, copy editors, yes, are in journalism. But they're a whole different role than what I do. And yes, I lump them all under editorial, but it's just a different part of the whole package ... Because they have to know news sense. They have to have a news sense, I mean, even to, when they choose which stories get put on ... As a matter of fact, I mean, and they better. I hope that the trend is that they DO put people who have real ties to journalism in there. 'Cause if they don't, it could end up hurting us. If you put people in there who don't understand bias and things like that and how you're supposed to, you know, accuracy and both sides and that kind of stuff, that can end up tainting our image. So I would want them to do that. But they're not reporters.

And yet every now and then, the new technologies can help the people who ARE real reporters do their job better. Several Sun reporters and editors spoke proudly of how they had used SunDial to gather information they couldn't easily have gotten otherwise or had been able to use the technology to enhance the meaning of that information. In other words, they had used SunDial as a tool to further their own key functions as information gatherers and sense makers.

BENEFITS -- AND DRAWBACKS -- OF NEW TECHNOLOGY

For example, one reporter claimed "our best usage of it so far" for a story he did about a radio station that had stopped playing certain rap lyrics. He used SunDial both to play some of the controversial lyrics and to solicit public comments on them -- comments that poured in by the hundreds and formed the basis of a follow-up story that would have been difficult, at best, to do using traditional information-gathering techniques. By actually providing a way for parents and kids to hear the lyrics, he said, "it broached another sense" that was inaccessible through print. SunDial success stories offered by other staffers included a recording of Charles Dickens' great-grandson reading from "A Christmas Carol" during a visit to the city; a first-person account from a police officer who was trapped in a tornado; and a story about a stock deal involving a major local company that made it onto SunDial in time to scoop the 10 o'clock TV news -- even though it wouldn't appear in print until the next morning.

That last example raises a perceived benefit of audiotex quite apart from its ability to provide "audio." Rather, it highlights what Weaver and Wilhoit (1991, 1992) continue to find is perceived by journalists as a vital part of their job: getting information to the public quickly. "We knew that TV was gonna do something that night. This was a big deal and everybody was waiting with bated breath on [the stockholders'] decision, and we knew there was no way we could compete against TV news on the actual announcement," explained the reporter-turned-editor who got the scoop to SunDial. "So what we decided to do was, we put just, like two sentences, three sentences on [SunDial] that night, and wrote a complete story for the next day." Did readers care? "I think we got something like 2,000 calls that night," she said. "In fact, I remember, I was sitting there working on the story and it was about 8 o'clock and some woman called, and she said 'I've been trying to get in for like half an hour, could you just tell me what they decided?' So that was, you know, that was pretty neat."

Indeed, a number of Sun journalists saw the ability to get information out faster as a valuable benefit of the new technology. "I like the immediacy of it," one editor said. "It kind of gives you the feeling that you're sort of ahead of the curve." And ahead of the competition, too. "It makes us more competitive with television and radio in terms of being able to disseminate news at a faster pace and update through time," another editor pointed out. "One of the greatest frustrations for myself at the newspaper is, you work all day at a thing and you get it in the paper, and you can't change it, you know, until 36 hours, 24 hours later. So this certainly gives you a lot more flexibility in that way, from a newspaper's standpoint."

But flexibility also can translate to a whole lot more work. "Frankly, I don't have time to take on another role," another editor said. Several reporters grumbled about being asked to take a tape recorder along on a story. "I don't think that's my job," one reporter said. "My job is to report the news and not to provide you a sound bite." And along with the pressure of added work comes at least the potential for the errors that come with rushing to get information out. "I could see where they might say, you know, we want hourly updates, otherwise why would somebody want to check [SunSpot] if they could just go to their radio?" an editor said. "So who's going to do it? If the reporter in the field is gonna do it, you're asking that person to take on a bigger responsibility. And also, it's gonna affect the quality of their news report." One writer described the danger of being seduced by the potential speed of online information delivery this way:

> It's fast and it's easy, and fast and easy often conflict with quality. Journalism is something when I started, that had been called a craft. And you know as well as I do that as a craft, it's something that takes time and takes a certain skill level and takes a certain amount of proficiency to make happen. And like with most things that count that people do, it's not something that's instantaneous. Instant is crap. But craft takes time. ... And I think that somewhere in all of the speed and impressive flash and whiz-bang stuff that's going on now, we have to maintain that notion that ... this is still a craft. And that you build stories through a step-by-step process that sometimes is laboriously slow, but the quality that comes from it is the desired outcome.

Journalists at the Sun also were apt to see the flip side of beating the broadcast competition by putting a story out electronically: getting beaten BY television on the paper's own story. "There's a lot of people who are really worried about scooping ourselves online," a reporter said. Another reporter said she wouldn't want to put the story she was working on that afternoon online "and get robbed of a huger impact in the morning." A major crime is one thing. "Television's already going to be on top of the murder anyway. So we might as well be writing everything that we can and keeping up with TV, because they're gonna be showing, doing the same thing electronically," she said. But a story that no one else knows about is a different animal.

AUDIENCE AND INDUSTRY CONCERNS

In addition to concern about tipping off the competition, there's the knowledge that, at least for now, the audience for the Sun is far larger than that for an online product. The impact in print will be greater because "newspapers, for some time to come, will be the main way to get the news out to people," the same reporter said.

Part of the reason is that, at least in the near term, online services will be available only to a limited number of people -- with the boundaries defined largely by economic factors. A society of information haves and have-nots raised some alarm among Sun journalists. Public access terminals are fine, but, as one editor pointed out, "Poor people are too busy trying to make ends meet to go spend time in libraries." Besides, the idea of producing a service that is only available to people who can afford a computer goes against the whole idea of a newspaper, as one reporter said. "I mean, what's a paper for?" she asked. "We have that whole image of, you know, helping out the downtrodden and giving a voice to the voiceless. Well, if you own a damned computer, have it in your home, how voiceless are you?"

But the key element in the notion that print will survive may be contained in the phrase "for some time to come." The consensus among Sun journalists seemed to be that newspapers would be around as long as they were ... but after that period of 10 or 20 or 30 years (the number varied depending on the age of the person doing the speculating), it becomes harder to say. "It's just a matter of accessibility. People who don't have computers have subscriptions to MY paper. I don't see that changing; I don't see that flip-flopping in my lifetime," said one 30-something reporter. But what ultimately "pushes us out," she added, may be "five-year-olds who can type."

"The younger generation is going to want everything electronic. They're not going to want newspapers," agreed an editor in his 40s. "I think by the time, not my kids, but my children's children, newspapers will probably be gone." The technology itself isn't the issue, he added. "It's people, it's the culture. You know, you may have the technology, but unless the people who are used to certain things can catch up, it doesn't matter what's technologically possible. The great masses will still (be left) behind until they eventually die off and are replaced with those people who came up with nothing but computers."

In the meantime, though, Sun journalists tend to see print and online forms of information delivery as complementary. Except for concern about getting beaten on a good story, new media are not generally seen as near-term threats. "I don't think online services are our competition yet," a reporter said. "It's just an addition (to the paper)."[1] Indeed, a number of journalists view the electronic services as promotional tools for the Sun, especially in their capacity for getting readers to interact with their local paper. There is "a movement afoot to try to get the public involved, quote-unquote involved, in the newspaper. And one way to do it is to get 'em to call in and receive the information or give their two bits worth," one veteran reporter said.

"It's a way of getting people to get interested or remain interested in the paper and feel that they have a stake in it."

Others question whether, in the words of one editor, "it's that big of a selling point for the product." But, he quickly added, "it's nice to have. I'd rather have it than not have it." And are new ways of delivering information something the Sun should be exploring? Absolutely -- in fact, the survival not just of the newspaper but of journalism as a profession may depend on it. "I think if we did not offer a different box of soap -- which is what this is -- that eventually, newspaper readership would decline and decline and decline," the same editor said. "A lot of journalists would be out of business. And the industry would pretty much be dead in the water."

In fact, though few Sun reporters and editors were willing to write the obituary for print, they unanimously supported the paper's new media ventures. True, there were scattered concerns about resources diverted to online services -- but even those were tempered with approbation.[2] "Certainly, we could use some more bodies on the metro desk. And that money that would go there, I guess is going to the technology side now. But I can see why they want to get involved in that. So I don't begrudge it," an editor said. "If that's the way things are going, then the company has to stay on top of it. I don't want to see us left behind."

That fear of being left behind was echoed by everyone from the top editor ("If we don't create [SunSpot], someone else will") on down. With a caveat that new forms not be allowed to compromise the print product, Sun journalists were all for moving full speed ahead. "If this is coming, then we should have a piece of it," a reporter said. "The world is going to computers, and (if) newspapers want to remain an important source for information, they have to do that, too," said another. "I imagine all the major newspapers will be coming to this eventually. It's good business," said a third. "The technology is there to do it. And if we don't do it, the telephone company or somebody else will," agreed a metro editor. "I don't think we have a choice. Times change."

Along with the fear that the Sun would be left behind -- a fear mitigated by the paper's visible (and audible) experiments with new media technology -- was a companion fear: that I, personally, will miss the digital boat. "Last time we had a metro lunch in which our computer gurus told us all about what's available online, I know a lot of us left that room in a fog. You know, just, like, my God," one reporter said. "We're gonna get left behind in the stampede. That's not rejecting it, it's just realizing the magnitude of it and the fact that we're not involved yet." "It's something I worry about," agreed an editor. "I feel like I'm so far behind that I'll never catch up, so why start?"

A number of reporters and editors expressed frustration that the Sun, while steaming full speed ahead as a company, was not making sure its own crew was on board. The problem was not so much that information was not available; the paper got fairly high marks for keeping staffers informed about what it was doing on the technological front, or at least making that information available (for instance, in its weekly in-house newsletter) for those who wanted it. Rather, the problem was a lack of opportunities for hands-on involvement.

That problem had two facets. One, with which this discussion began, was the print newsroom's relative lack of interaction with SunDial and SunSpot. "The key thing is that it's possible to be almost unaware of it," said a new reporter. "It's not part of my daily or even monthly journalistic life here." To staffers on the online side, the segregation was a major source of frustration -- and they laid the blame on Sun management. "When you go down to the newsroom, there's a lot of vocal support," one online editor said. But, he added, there's no real commitment from the top that the online services are important news vehicles and integration among the two newsrooms is truly a priority.

Sun management is aware of the problem. But the editor in chief said the situation is complicated. SunSpot, for example, was in an extended beta test; the launch date had been postponed repeatedly. The question, he said, becomes "when do you get out the bullhorn?" It's hard to generate a sense of urgency when there's no real product, he added. The strategy has been to push gently and hope the print journalists will "one by one or two by two, get on the ark." In the meantime, although initiative in providing material for SunDial has been made a part of reporters' annual evaluations, a metro editor agreed that "if you don't push it, it doesn't happen." The result, a reporter said, is that while cooperation with the online side has become "part of our evaluation process," it has not become "an integral part of your thought process."

But Sun reporters and editors were frustrated less by the lack of involvement with new ways of delivering info than by a second facet of their personal inexperience with new communication technology: the lack of access to new ways of GETTING information. Several expressed the belief that technology -- in particular, the explosion of information available over the Internet -- could make them better reporters; their frustration was that inadequate equipment and training were keeping them from it. A clash of priorities between online and print journalists was apparent. The former (who themselves were recent emigrants from the metro staff) wanted the newspaper journalists to see their jobs changing to include producing content for SunDial and SunSpot. The latter wanted their jobs to basically remain unchanged -- producing content for the newspaper -- but saw the capability of doing that job better, thanks to new media. Clearly, the print journalists' main concern remained centered on their role as information gatherers and sense makers. They were interested in getting and writing the story, not delivering it.

"If we could get Internet on [SunSpot], then I think there'd be a lot more interest among the reporters," one reporter said. And it needs to be "accessible to be useful on a daily, day-to-day type thing," agreed another, who said she was forced to go to the public library, "like a homeless person," when she wanted to get information online. "The Internet is such an increasingly important part of our lives that it's insane to me that a newspaper in a major city doesn't have its newsroom wired," declared a third, citing the availability of key government documents online. "We need better equipment," still another reporter said. "It's very hard to embrace a system that you can't use."

And equipment is just the beginning. Training is needed, too. Though some reporters said it was their own fault for not actively seeking help, and several cited the local "computer guru" as a valuable resource, others expressed a desire for something more substantial. In the words of one reporter:

> You know, there are some people who just love this shit and it's just like they have this gene in their heads, it says, 'Well, you push this button and put this arcane bunch of letters together and you'll get what you want.' Well, I haven't a clue. I mean, if I can't find the place in a manual that says 'To get this, do this,' I'm not gonna do it. ... It's like learning a foreign language because there is that time when you can understand what the other person is saying, but when it's your turn to talk back, you don't even know which words to use!

But despite their frustrations over the inability to get at the wealth of information available on the Internet, one expanded source of incoming information WAS available to Sun journalists.

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL WITH READERS

SunDial not only lets readers call in and access information; they also can call in and provide information. In fact, the Sun frequently prompts them to do so, printing questions and special phone numbers along with a story in the paper. Reporters get "brownie points" for suggesting such applications, though most sheepishly admitted the majority of ideas come from online staffers, who sit in on budget meetings and decide which stories seem appropriate for generating reader feedback. The system has been in place for years.

How is it working? Despite success stories such as the one with the rap lyrics cited above, the reviews were decidedly mixed. Some newspaper journalists were enthusiastic about what one reporter called the ability to "touch the pulse of the community," yielding a great "riches of stories that can be explored." Others praised what they saw as the democratic nature of an interactive medium. "The [Sun] has provided the medium through which people can communicate more effectively," another reporter said. "There will be more outlets for free speech, and I think that that's our mission," agreed a third. "I envision this kind of dictating a more open, more perestroika kind of attitude about journalism. ... The striving and the driving for truth becomes a foot race with a lot of people in the race. So it's not just my mission any more, as a journalist, it's every citizen's mission."

But others cited a variety of problems. Feedback from readers can be nice, but it has its down sides. For one thing, interactive forms offer "more ways for the shadier types, or the people who have an ax to grind, or the people who have a pitch to make to also find their way into the newsroom, into the paper," said the same reporter who saw their richness as a source of story ideas. Perhaps the main drawback, though,

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

stems from logistics. Getting lots of feedback sounds super ... until you actually have to sit and listen to it all, decide which of it might belong in a story and make the follow-up verification calls required by Sun policy before a reader's comments can be used. "The actual process is that you have to sit down all day long and listen to all of these things, and that seems very labor-intensive," said a reporter.

An editor suggested that using a call-in number sounded like a wonderful and easy way for reporters to avoid having to stand on a corner and employ the universally loathed "'Scuse me, I'm from the Sun ..." approach to man-on-the-street interviews. But SunDial often turned out to be "more trouble than it was worth." He described one effort to have a reporter use a SunDial box to find out what readers thought about a controversial proposal to install slot machines at a local racetrack:

> I said 'This is easier than doing a man-on-the-street interview, or going out to the [track] and asking people what they think.' So he gets this material and he turns in the story, and he doesn't have a quote in there. And he says that none of it made any sense. And I said 'Come on,' I said, you know, 'How many calls were there?' He says, 'Oh, 20 to 25 calls.' I said, 'Somebody had to say something that made some sense.' So I had him go back through it, and he typed up some transcripts of the comments and stuff, and we found one or two comments that were OK. ... But it still, it seemed like it was a lot of effort to go to, to get a couple of quotes. And he was out at the track! And he could of got the quotes out there, just by going up to people while they were in line: ''Scuse me!'

In general, Sun journalists seemed caught between a desire for more information and a recognition of the risk of drowning when the floodgates are opened. There was widespread agreement with the reporter who said that "more is better in terms of information," both for reporters and their readers; indeed, readers' ability to get "way, way deeper" into a story that the paper lacks adequate room to tell is, potentially at least, "a great plus," as another reporter said. And yet, as an editor said, "There's only so much information the human being can absorb." "The overwhelming nature of it is certainly something to fear," a reporter agreed with a nervous laugh. In the words of another editor:

> We're suffering from information overload. I mean, everybody talks about this as such a wonderful thing, look at ALL this stuff that's available. And I go, that's great, there's still only 24 hours in a day. Until you, if you can't do anything about that, it doesn't matter that millions of megabytes of information you can give me -- 'cause I can't use 'em. So it becomes more and more critical for there to be some kind of gate keeper deciding what goes out. 'Cause otherwise, people will just be overwhelmed by it.

They will be overwhelmed not just by the volume of the information, but by the inability to tell what is worthwhile and what is worthless. "We have that accuracy, we have that verification, we have that credibility, that traditional sense of defining the news, so that people know they can pick up the [Sun] and they know it's not junk. And they know it's not tripe. But that it's substantive and that it's something on which they can act as informed citizens to know more about their community and take steps to improve their community," one reporter said.

In other words, journalistic norms add value -- and that value ensures the survival of the journalist, at least in his or her own eyes. The Sun policy of verifying SunDial calls and of refusing to use quotes from people who do not leave their names also reflects the belief that the information journalists disseminate must be credible, even when the information that may surround it in cyberspace is not. Until it is verified, it may be information -- but it is not news, as one editor explained. "At least when you get the [Sun], you know where this information is coming from," another editor said. "If [SunSpot] and these other interactive computer services just open up the gates and let anybody come in, then, I think, real questions of credibility arise.

Where is the information coming from? Who says? Who's checked it out? Who knows if it's impartial or not impartial? Who knows if it has an agenda or not? I think that's dangerous."

As for whether the JOURNALIST has an agenda ... well, the Sun was wrestling with that one, too. Some reporters and editors expressed misgivings about reporters participating in online forums on SunSpot; the fear, as one reporter put is, is that "when you're in a dialogue, you slide into subjectivity, speculation, and there's no way you can verify everything you say." You also can be subjected to unwanted questions from readers. "I think there could be a problem with that, an ethical dilemma. I think that if you start getting involved in how you did the story, people start writing, well, how did you do this, how did you find out? I think you should not be a part of that, I think you're getting involved in the story," another reporter said. "Sources, process, you know. You just don't want to be involved in that."

CONCLUSION

In summary, Sun reporters and editors have plenty of misgivings about new technology. But they are misgivings, not deep-seated fears. Sun journalists as a whole do not see the changes as a threat. They are skeptical, certainly, and less than enthusiastic about many aspects, but not antagonistic. They are not thrilled with the idea of change for the sake of change alone; one editor suggested that the more veteran reporters, in particular, tend to have a "dinosaur view of new media, and so every time there's a mention of it, they cringe and walk away." But an upper-level editor suggested the general newsroom attitude was more in line with an overall "Midwest work ethic: Just do it."

As a group, the answer offered by these journalists to the questions at the heart of this study is that technological change in information delivery does not significantly affect what they do. And as long as that remains the case, as long as neither the process nor product they value is altered fundamentally, they are relatively open to what they see as minor modifications to their role -- and even, ideally, the potential for enhancements. "When reporters sit around and start to bitch, there's a lot of things that come up on the Bitch-o-Meter WAY, way before 'And how are we implementing [SunSpot]?'" one reporter said. "There's no reporter who can say that their story was screwed or their time was abused because of it. So when reporters sit around and drink beer, they're not griping about [SunDial or SunSpot]."

"As long as I can write stories," said another reporter with a laugh, "I don't care."

But should he? In one way, journalists may be right in their conviction that what matters is, and should remain, good journalism. New tools can always be learned; core ideas and values are both more important and more enduring. There is not a small amount of wisdom in approaching new delivery mechanisms as merely a different vehicle for what journalists do and remaining focused on their crucial role as credible sense-makers in an increasingly information-overloaded world.

But if they are at least partially right, they also are at least partially wrong in shrugging off interactive media as nothing to be concerned about or involved with. If sense-making and interpretation are increasingly vital, it is vital that those functions be carried out in an environment of exponentially expanding information. That environment obviously is not the printed newspaper, with its steadily rising production costs and steadily shrinking readership. Nor is it the competitive environment in which they are accustomed to operating. Newspaper journalists, such as those at the Sun, still tend to think of "competition" as meaning television. They need to think again. The Internet and its future successors take the notion of competition for readers' time and attention (and advertising dollars, something few journalists interviewed here even mentioned) far beyond broadcast or cable media. Interactive media represent a shift in the whole concept of what is information, who provides it, and what can be done with it.

The environment in which the journalist's crucial functions need to be carried out is online. And the need for journalistic involvement in online media is steadily increasing, as dozens more papers activate World Wide Web sites with every week that passes. That means publishers must meet the demand for greater access to the Internet and other online resources. It also means journalists must overcome their laissez-faire attitude and realize that this DOES affect them, here and now.

The time has come for newspapers to "get out the bullhorn," in the words of the Sun's editor-in-chief. The Sun is on the right track in terms of integrating its online media with its newspaper newsroom; indeed, much of the advice offered by industry experts, such as positioning the online staffers in the newsroom and having them attend daily budget meetings (Opportunities in Anarchy, 1995), is already being followed. But the editor was correct when he characterized the process of rolling out SunSpot as much "like putting a frog in a frying pan" and turning up the heat slowly so no one notices it. It is time to make the frog sizzle enough to jump out of the frying pan and into the fire. Interactive media are blazing new communication trails. It is the journalist's self-defined, and constitutionally protected, role to help ensure that some light is shed in the process.

ENDNOTES

[1] It may be worth noting that while the newsroom people tended to think about new media in terms of the paper's editorial content (and the processes that go into creating that content), their bosses had other competitive forces in mind. "The real concern," said one of the managing editors, "is you'll lose your classifieds to some guy with a computer."

[2] It is possible, of course, that the journalists interviewed here, conscious that what they were saying was "on the record," would have been hesitant to criticize their employer to an outside researcher whose tape recorder was running. However, the reaction was so overwhelmingly positive that it seems unlikely to stem wholly, or even primarily, from deception. Their support may have been less strong than they indicated, but the underlying sentiment that the Sun was right to pursue new media forms seems genuine.

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Who Reports the Hard/Soft News? A Study of Differences in Story Assignments to Male and Female Journalists at *Newsweek*

A Study

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Who Reports the Hard/Soft News? A Study of Differences in Story Assignments to Male and Female Journalists at *Newsweek*

A Study

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the achievements and influence of women at *Newsweek* since the 1970 protest against discrimination and the eventual institution of affirmative action. If the role of women has changed, then their story assignments should not be different from those of their male counterparts. The results of this study show dramatic changes since 1970, but men at *Newsweek* are still more influential than the women. The role of women at *Newsweek* does not clearly match their presence in the journalism field. Even though more women cover hard news stories, the analysis shows that their stories are usually shorter than those filed by their male counterparts and are mostly about national politics, involving no risks. The current backlash against affirmative action may jeopardize efforts to make more changes.

The debate over the continuation of affirmative action programs has raised questions about whether women and other disadvantaged groups have benefited from the programs, and whether they are doing equivalent work as their counterparts in the work place. There is no doubt that the number of women who have had access to previously male professions like journalism, has increased over the years because of the institution of affirmative action programs. The number of women graduating from journalism schools and entering newsrooms has increased dramatically since the 1970s, but their influence has not matched their larger presence in the field. Women have less opportunities in the profession and cases of discrimination in the newsrooms still exist, though not as provident as in the past. Men in journalism perform most of the prestigious tasks, covering most of the real news or hard news, while most women are relegated to covering soft news.

Until the civil rights legislation of the 1960s, male journalists had deluded themselves that women do not belong to the newsroom, except in war when most men were overseas. Even after the civil rights legislation, newswomen did not immediately seek redress. In March 1970, 46 women working at *Newsweek* led the way for formal protests against discrimination in the newsroom. Up to this time, *Newsweek* women were relegated to the role of researchers while men were reporters and writers. The women timed their complaint to coincide with *Newsweek* magazine's issue of March 23, 1970, which featured a cover story entitled "Women in Revolt," written by Helen Dudar, who was not employed at *Newsweek*. Dudar was working for *The New York Post* at the time. The women at *Newsweek* were eventually joined by those at *Time* magazine, and both cases were later settled out of court after management promised to implement affirmative action.

Opportunities for women in news have increased dramatically since the *Newsweek* case, and many female journalists have ventured into new domains which were once held exclusively by men. Some women are now covering major conflicts and sports locker rooms, assignments which were exclusively for men three decades ago. Despite these changes, a number of questions and concerns about the status of women in the newsroom still remain unanswered. For instance, what is the major role of women in the newsrooms? Are there differences in story assignments to male and female reporters? Are female journalists filing the same number of stories as their male counterparts? Are there cases of assumption of incompetence? Are female journalists resented by their male counterparts? All these questions need to be addressed. There may be more women in the newsrooms but their influence does not match their presence.

The purpose of this study was to examine the achievements and influence of women at *Newsweek* since the 1970 protest and the eventual institution of affirmative action. The study explored differences in story assignments to male and female reporters, looking at how many female reporters at *Newsweek* have managed to get the coveted nickname "front page girl" and whether more women are now covering hard news. Cover stories and hard news are the most visible and can help to show who has the greater influence at *Newsweek* and on the public's perception of current events.

If the women's movement and the affirmative action programs at *Newsweek* have benefited female journalists, some of the results should be shown by more female reporters covering stories, not only soft news stories but hard news stories also, just as their male counterparts. However, if the place of most women in the newsroom is primarily soft news, then they have not benefited much from affirmative action programs and their work is not as influential as that of their male counterparts. This study showed that women at *Newsweek* have not yet overcome the old journalism school sex-role stereotyping which did not challenge women and relegated them to soft news, leaving the men to cover the "real news" or hard news.

Review of the Literature

From the inception of the first journalism schools in the early decades of the twentieth century, women were relegated to surbodinate status in terms of assignments, role models and advising. They were not encouraged to compete directly with men. Male students edited school newspapers and wrote news of politics and public affairs. Female students were expected to excel only at soft feature stories.

In the 1930s, the number of women reporters and editors increased dramatically, but most of them worked either on women's pages, magazines or book publishing. Women rarely covered politics or other forms of standard hard news. Ishbel Ross, a New York newspaper woman who wrote the first history of women journalists in 1936 found that very few women in the 1930s qualified for the coveted nickname "front page girl," accorded those considered capable of front-page assignments. Those who did, were thought to be paradoxes of masculine ruthlessness and feminine gentility. Ross found that it was not uncommon for some editors to tell women that they were biologically unsuited to reporting. One city editor even pointed out in a reporting textbook that most women were incapable of covering police and court news.

World War II created more opportunities for women to work outside the home and in 1943 they made up 50 percent of newspapers staffs in smaller cities. As did their male counterparts, women journalists struggled to get overseas to cover the war, but were discouraged by the State Department. A few women were accredited, but most stayed to substitute for the men who went to war. Those women who managed to go overseas were still discriminated against by male generals and did not receive the same respect accorded their male counterparts.

After the war, men took over the newsrooms again and most of the competent women working in newspapers were assigned to women's sections, covering stories about food, furnishing, fashion and family. Women reporting undesirable news assignments that no men were interested in managed to hang onto jobs. A *Mademoiselle* survey of editors at 27 daily newspapers in 1949 found that female reporters could not be assigned to beats outside women's departments because they were too unpredictable and emotional.

In the 1950s and 1960s the number of women in media occupations continued to rise, despite the providence of discrimination in newsrooms. A 1970 census found that women in journalism were outnumbered only 2:1 by men, but were working at lower levels, mainly engaged in office work. Little was done by female journalists up to this time to take advantage of the civil rights laws against discrimination enacted in the 1960s.

The eventual access of women to the journalism profession prompted more media studies about discrimination and the sex-role stereotyping of women. Burkhart and Sigel (1987) found that women journalists who wanted to be taken seriously used initials rather than first names in their bylines. This resulted from the traditional relegation of female journalists to soft news stories, while men were in charge of the hard news and business departments. Burhart and Sigel found that audiences judged stories similarly regardless of whether the byline was of a male or female. The found that bylines with unclear gender were evaluated somewhat lower. They concluded that attitudes toward female bylines had changed, contrary to a number of earlier studies which might have influenced story assignments to female reporters. Shaw, Cole, Moore and Cole (1986) had suggested that if readers notice a byline, then the sex of the journalist could influence their evaluations of the story itself. Byline sex could become an attribute of the message. They found that the female byline was remembered better in fashion stories.

Many studies in the 1980s also showed that though the status of female journalists improved after the discrimination suits and the institution of affirmative action in the 1970s, women continued to have fewer opportunities and influence in the newsroom compared to their male counterparts. Wilson (1987), surveyed 1,599 daily newspapers and 1,091 radio stations and found that women outnumbered men as beginning reporters, but could not proceed up the ladder like their male counterparts because of bias in salary and promotion, and the fact that media are a historically male dominated business.

Eberhard and Myers (1987) found that women continued to face a number of barriers in the newsroom and had a long way to go before they could be accepted as sports journalists, a domain viewed as exclusively male. Their study covered female sportswriters in the nation's large newspapers. Large was defined as those papers with a circulation of more than 100,000 daily. They found 96 female sports writers working at 69 newspapers, out of a list of 109 qualifying newspapers. Almost 60 percent of female sportswriters agreed that they faced discrimination from male peers in their sports department. They also made it clear that discrimination was not as prevalent as in the past, but it was still a concern. Forms of discrimination were mainly attitudinal: condescension, assumption of incompetence, resentment of female presence, lack of assignments and promotion, social isolation and sexual harassment. Fifty-eight percent of the women also said then met discrimination from people in the sports field. This discrimination included denial of access to locker rooms and physical threats. Nearly 80 percent of the respondents agreed that there were not enough women in newspaper sports writing, but the doors were open. The only problem was that women were reluctant to get in and break down the barriers in a male world.

The Women, Men and Media conference (1989) found that women were still neglected by the media, with men determining what is news. Female journalists remained underrepresented at major newspapers. A survey of front pages from ten newspapers in March 1989 showed that only 27 percent of bylines were female. *USA Today*, which emphasized feature-oriented news, ranked at the top of the list with an average of 41 percent, and *The New York Times* at the bottom with a female byline average of 16 percent. Women held only 6 percent of top media jobs and 25 percent of middle-management jobs.

The situation for women in broadcasting was equally poor, if not worse. Only 15.8 percent of news correspondents shown on nightly network newscasts were women, an increase of six percent from 9.9 percent in 1975. This was only a small increase, compared to the number of women who joined broadcasting during the same period. Stone (1989), in a study of the Radio-Television News Directors Association, found that women and minorities were hired at rates higher than their share of the news workforce.

Forty-four percent of new TV hires were women, but only 33 percent of all TV news staff were female. In radio, 44 percent of new entrants were women, but only 32 percent of the workforce was female.

The Media Watch project of Betty Friedan, a professor at the University of Southern California, and the American Society of Newspaper Editors (1990) found only slight improvements in coverage of stories by women on the front pages of 20 U.S. newspapers. Female reporters represented 28 percent of the bylines, up from 27 percent in 1989. *The Albuquerque Tribune* averaged the highest number of female bylines during the entire period covered by the study.

A Center for Media and Public Affairs (1990) survey of the network evening newscasts found that only five women were included in the list of the 50 most prominent network reporters, ranked by the number of appearances in newscasts. The situation for minority women was worse; only ABC's Ken Kashiwara, of Japanese decent, appeared in the rankings. Women and minorities filed fewer stories in 1990 than in 1989. Female reporters filed only 13 percent of the stories on the network evening news in 1990, a decline of 1 percent from 14 percent in 1989. The decline was attributed to the hard news stories coming from the Persian Gulf war. Male reporters dominated coverage of news reports from the Gulf War. A monitoring study by women, Men and Media (1990) found that only 2 percent of the total number of stories tracked on network news, including CNN and PBS, were filed by women of color.

Smith, Fredin and Fergusson (1986) found that the average TV network affiliate newsroom had eight reporters and 39 percent of the reporters had female names. They found that although women covered more educational stories that their male counterparts, coverage of other stories was similar. However, there was no support for the notion that female reporters less often report the stories that lead newscasts.

Singleton and Cook (1989) evaluated differences in topics assigned to female and male network reporters. They found that while there was a measurable differential between the groups, the range and importance of women's reporting had improved in recent years.

Hypotheses

Based on these studies, the following hypotheses were posted for this study:

> **H_{1a}**
> Most soft news stories at *Newsweek* are covered by female reporters and editors, while their male counterparts cover most of the hard news stories.

Although female journalists have benefited from the 1970s law suits and affirmative action, men control the newsrooms and cover most the hard news. As Eberhard and Myers (1987) found out in their survey of more than 100 large newspapers, women continued to face a number of barriers in the newsroom and they had a long way to go before they could be accepted as sports journalists, a domain viewed as exclusively male. If female journalists at *Newsweek* have benefited from affirmative action and are as important in the newsroom as their male counterparts, then their story assignments should not be different from those covered by their male counterparts.

H_{1b}

There has been no change in the types of stories covered by women at *Newsweek* since 1970.

Types of stories covered by male and female journalists have not changed over the years because men are in control of the newsrooms and the stereotypes against the role of female journalists still exist. As the Center for Media and Public Affairs (1990) survey of the network evening newscasts found, women file fewer stories than their male counterparts. The stories filed in 1990 were fewer than those filed the previous year, a drop attributed to male domination of coverage of hard news from the Gulf War. Female journalists did not get a fair share of coverage of the Gulf War.

H_2

Women at *Newsweek* file fewer cover stories than do their male counterparts.

Men cover the most important and prestigious assignments, and news on the front covers of *Newsweek* would be the most important and prestigious. Few women file important and prestigious assignments, which explains why few of them have made it to the cover page. As the Media Watch project and the American Society of Newspaper Editors (1990) found out, there was only a slight improvement in coverage of stories by women on the front pages of 20 U.S. newspapers. Females represented only 28 percent of the bylines, up from 27 percent in 1989.

H_3

> Women at *Newsweek* report fewer stories overall than do their male counterparts.

The Women, Men and Media Conference (1989) found that women were neglected by the media, with men determining what news is. Female journalists remained underrepresented in major newspapers. The Center for Media and Public Affairs survey (1990) also found that only 13 percent of the stories on the network evening news were filed by women, a decline of 1 percent from 14 percent in 1989. These studies showed that two decades after the civil rights legislation, women were not as influential in the news business as their male counterparts. If there has been no dramatic increase in the number of stories filed by female journalists at *Newsweek* since 1970, it will show that the women's movement of 1970 has had little effect and women have not benefited much from the institution of affirmative action.

> H_4
> Female editors and reporters at *Newsweek* file shorter stories that do their male counterparts.

Singleton and Cook evaluated differences in topics assigned to female and male network news reporters and found a measurable differential between the groups, although the range and importance of women's reporting assignments had improved. If women are assigned mostly soft news stories, then they do not take up as much space as the men who file mostly hard news stories. A content analysis of the Vanderbilt Television News Abstracts from 1972 through 1987 found that all networks had increased the amount of soft news, but this type of news remained a small part of the newscast.

Methodology

The methodology used in this study was content analysis. The unit of analysis was the individual news story drawn from all *Newsweek* issues from the month of March at six points in time: 1970, 1975, 1980, 1985, 1990 and 1995. The month of March was selected because that is when *Newsweek* women launched their formal opposition against discrimination. The *Newsweek* magazines for analysis were obtained from Baylor University's Moody Memorial Library.

Coding for gender of editors and reporters of news stories. The stories were coded for gender of editors by classifying them as either male [M], female [F], both male and female [MF], and can't be determined [CD] for those where there were no names or the gender could not be identified. The gender of the editor/editors and reporter/reporters was determined from the byline names (such as John White [M], Sarah Osborn [F]). An article was coded as male [M] if the editor/editors and reporter/reporters were men. Similarly, an article was coded as female [F] if the editor/editors and reporter/reporters were women. Articles written by male and female editors or reporters were coded as both male and female [MF]. Stories which did not have a byline, and those where names of the editors or reporters could not be identified, were coded as can't be determined [CD].

Coding for types of stories by female journalists. All stories in *Newsweek* were coded as either "hard news" or "soft news." In this study, hard news was defined as any story that focuses on issues of ongoing policy consideration, factual according to current public events, or social issues and controversies that concern members of the audience. For example, the following story which appeared in the *Newsweek* magazine issue of March 23, 1995 was coded as hard news:

> Headline: What about Women?
> Affirmative action: The White House looks for ways to regain control of the treacherous issue.
> Text: It wasn't much of a march on the White House last Wednesday-two dozen leaders of women's groups and their staffs. The chants carried the ring of a bygone era. "Hey, hey, ho ho, discrimination has to go!" But their protest went to the heart of a debate that threatens to divide the country. Affirmative action, they argued, is being defined as a racial issue.

Soft news was defined as any story that focuses on a human interest topic, feature or policy issue. The following story which appeared in the Arts section of *Newsweek* issue of March 23, 1995 was coded as soft news:

> Headline: No Faking the Funk
> Tupac Shakur is serious
> Text: Between dodging bullets in Manhattan last November and entering prison on a sexual-abuse charge, rapper Tupac Shakur found time to release his third album, "Me against the World." Shakur takes the angst of young urban black males and sets it to a funky "old school" beat.

The difference in types of stories covered by female and male reporters/editors was determined by comparing the total number and percentages of the hard and soft news stories covered by women, men and male/female.

Coding cover page stories by female reporters/editors. Each cover story of *Newsweek* magazines in March of each year included in the study was analyzed to identify the gender of the reporter or editor. All cover stories were coded for gender of reporters/editors by classifying the stories as either female [F], male [M], both male and female [MF], and can't determine [CD] for neither male or female. The total number and the percentage of cover stories filed by women in March of each year included in the study was determined, and compared to the number and percentages covered by the men and men/women.

Counting the number of stories by female journalists. The total number of *Newsweek* stories in the March issues of each year included in the study was counted. The number and the percentage of stories coded as female [F], male [M], male and female [MF] was then determined.

Measuring length of stories by women. The number of paragraphs making up each story coded as female [F] were counted. The average number of paragraphs making up each story coded as female [F] was determined. For comparison, the average number of paragraphs making up stories coded as male [M] and male/female [MF] was also determined.

Results

The results in table 1a show that there is no significant difference in the types of stories filed by male and female journalists at *Newsweek* during the sample period. The chi-square value (X^2 = 1.68783, *df*=1, p>.05) does not support hypothesis 1a. The difference in stories covered by male and female journalists is not significant, and hypothesis 1a that most soft news stories at *Newsweek* are covered by female reporters and editors, while their male counterparts cover most of the hard news stories was not supported. The analysis showed that 48% of the stories covered by female journalists were soft news, while 52% were hard news stories. Hard news stories account for 59% of stories covered by male journalists. The results of the analysis can support the following null hypothesis: " There is no significant difference in the types of stories covered by male and female journalists at *Newsweek*."

Table 1b, which includes stories by male/female journalists, shows that the difference in the types of stories covered by female, male, and male/female is not significant, and the hypothesis that most soft news stories at *Newsweek* are covered by female reporters and editors, while their male counterparts cover most of the hard news stories was not supported. The results ($X^2 = 2.28388$, $df=2$, $p>.05$) show no significant difference in the types of stories covered by female, male, and male/female journalists. Most of the stories filed by both male and female reporters were hard news stories, accounting for 62% of the stories covered. Female journalists had the highest percentage of soft news stories, while male/female had the lowest.

The results from Table 1c show that there were significant differences in the frequency of hard news stories covered by female journalists at *Newsweek* since 1970. The chi-square value ($X^2 = 17.27188$, $df=5$, $p>.05$) supports hypothesis 1b that there has been no significant change in types of stories covered by women at *Newsweek* since 1970. In 1970, women at *Newsweek* did not cover any hard news stories, but in 1990 they were covering 26% of the hard news stories. The number of hard news stories at *Newsweek* covered by men continued to decline from 100% in 1970 to 74% in 1990. There was a decline of 6% in the number of hard news stories covered by women at *Newsweek* in 1995 and an increase of 10% for those covered by men.

As indicated in Table 1d, the chi-square value (X^2 = 47.89514, *df*=10, p<.05) shows that there was a significant frequency difference in coverage of hard news stories by male and female journalists at *Newsweek*. There was an increase in the number of hard news stories covered by male/female journalists. In 1970, hard news stories by male/female journalists were only 5%, in 1985 they accounted for 42%, and declined dramatically in 1995. The number of hard news stories by men increased in 1990 and 1995.

Table 1e shows that there was a significant difference in coverage of soft news stories by male and female journalists at *Newsweek*. Male journalists covered more soft news stories at *Newsweek* than did their female counterparts. Table 1f, which includes male/female stories, shows a significant frequency difference in coverage of soft news stories by male and female journalists. In 1970, male journalists covered 92% of soft news stories, but declined to 49% in 1995. The number of soft news stories covered by female journalists increased from 3% in 1970 to 29% in 1995. Male/female journalists covered 22% of soft news stories in 1995.

Hypothesis 2 that "women at *Newsweek* file fewer cover page stories than do their male counterparts" was supported. Women filed only 4% of cover page stories during the sample period. Most cover page stories were covered by both male/female reporters. The male journalists covered 25% of the cover page stories during the sample period. Table 2b (X^2 =2.83333, *df*=5, p>.05) shows that there has been no significant change in the coverage of cover stories by male and female journalists.

The results from Tables 3a and 3b show a significant difference in the number of stories covered by male and female journalists, and hypothesis 3 that "women at News week report fewer stories overall than do their male counterparts" was supported. The chi-square value ($X^2 = 27.71724$, $df=5$, $p<.05$) supports the contention that there have been significant changes in the number of stories covered by male and female journalists since 1970. Female journalists filed only 14% of the stories in the sample period. Their male counterparts covered 64%, and the remaining 22% were covered by both male and female journalists. The number of stories covered by female journalists increased from 2% in 1970 to 27% in 1995, while those filed by male journalists dropped from 98% in 1970 to 73% in 1995. In 1980 and 1985 there was a significant increase in the number of stories by both male and female journalists.

The results from Tables 4a and 4b show that there was a significant difference between the length of stories by male and female journalists at *Newsweek*. The chi-square value ($X^2 = 166.22383$, $df=5$, $p>.05$) in Table 4a supports the hypothesis that "female editors and reporters at *Newsweek* file shorter stories than do their male counterparts." The length of stories by female journalists increased from 4% in 1970 to 20% in 1995, and the length of male stories declined from 84% of the paragraphs in *Newsweek* magazine in 1970 to 57% in 1995. There was a dramatic increase in the length of stories by both male and female journalists in 1980.

Discussion and Conclusion

Some of the assumptions put forward initially are not substantiated by the data compiled in this study. The hypotheses based on the assumption that there are significant differences in the types of stories covered by male and female journalists were disconfirmed.

The results of this study clearly demonstrate that there have been significant changes at *Newsweek* since 1970 and female journalists have benefited from the institution of affirmative action, although their counterparts are still more influential. The hypothesis that female journalists cover mostly soft news stories was not supported, but the results also show that they continue to file fewer hard news stories than their male counterparts. It is also important to note that the number of hard news stories filed by male and female reporters increased dramatically in the 1980s. This trend led to a reduction in the number of stories filed by only men.

Surprisingly, male journalists covered mores soft news stories than did their female counterparts. One explanation for this may be because men are still dominant at *Newsweek* and file most of the stories, whether soft or hard news. According to the analysis, men covered over half of all the stories at *Newsweek* during the sample period. There are also more stories by both male and female than those by only female. These results support the assumption that men are more influential than women at *Newsweek*.

While it might be argued that women have benefited from affirmative action since 1970, their role at *Newsweek* does not clearly match their presence in the journalism field. Even though women cover hard news stories, the analysis shows that their stories are usually shorter than those filed by their male counterparts. In this case, length can be used to differentiate between the hard news stories filed by both genders. Since hard news stories filed by men are longer, they may be termed as more important than those filed by women, which are shorter on average. Stories that involve wars and other conflicts are usually the longest in *Newsweek*, and are covered mostly by men. Hard news stories filed by women are mostly about national politics and involve no risks.

Patterns of cover page story coverage since 1970 are important to note. In the 1970s, cover page stories were filed almost exclusively by male journalists, but since 1980 these stories are covered by both male and female journalists. This is an important trend because cover stories are the most visible and can help to show who has greater influence at *Newsweek* and on the public's perception of current events. The fact that women and men share coverage of front page stories shows the positive changes that have taken place at *Newsweek* since 1970.

Perhaps the most significant conclusion that can be drawn from this study, and certainly the one with the greatest data support, is the fact that the role of women at *Newsweek* has changed dramatically since 1970. To a great extent women at *Newsweek* have overcome the old journalism school sex-role stereotyping which did not challenge women and relegated them to soft news, leaving the men to cover the hard or real news. Overall, the number of stories filed by women at *Newsweek* has increased since 1970, but men still cover more stories and the data analysis shows that they are more influential in the newsroom. The role of women at *Newsweek* does not match their presence in the journalism field, and the current backlash against affirmative action programs may jeopardize efforts to make more changes.

Table 1a
Types of stories according to sex of Journalists at Newsweek

	Byline Sex	
	Female	Male
Type of Story		
Hard News	52%	59%
Soft News	48	41
Total	100%	100%
	n=93	n=436*

X^2 =1.68783, *df*=1, p>.05
*Stories by Male/Female are excluded

Table 1b
Types of stories by Male and Female Journalists at Newsweek

		Byline Sex	
	Female	Male	Male/Female
Type of Story			
Hard News	52%	59%	62%
Soft News	48	41	38
Total	100%	100%	100%
	n=93	n=436	n=157

X^2 =2.28388, *df*=2, p>.05

Table 1c
Frequency of Hard News Stories covered by Male and Female Journalists at Newsweek since 1970

	Year					
	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995
Byline Sex						
Female	0%	5%	17%	22%	26%	20%
Male	100	95	83	78	74	80
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=21	n=78	n=47	n=45	n=53	n=61

X^2 =17.27188, *df*=5, p<.05
*Male/Female bylines excluded

Table 1d
Frequency of Hard News Stories covered by Male and Female Journalists at Newsweek since 1970

	Year					
	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995
Byline Sex						
Female	0%	5%	11%	13%	20%	17%
Male	95	84	53	45	56	68
Male/Female	5	11	36	42	24	15
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=22	n=88	n=73	n=77	n=70	n=72

X^2 =47.89514, *df*=10, p<.05

Table 1e

Frequency of Soft News Stories covered by Male and Female Journalists at Newsweek since 1970

	Year					
	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995
Byline Sex						
Female	3%	21%	7%	26%	31%	38%
Male	97	79	93	74	69	62
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=35	n=47	n=42	n=34	n=26	n=40

X^2 =20.49101, *df*=5, p<.05

*Male/Female bylines excluded

Table 1f

Frequency of Soft News Stories covered by Male and Female Journalists at Newsweek since 1970

	Year					
	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995
Byline Sex						
Female	3%	18%	6%	18%	19%	29%
Male	92	64	72	59	44	49
Male/Female	5	18	22	23	37	22
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=37	n=57	n=54	n=44	n=41	n=51

X^2 =34.40724, *df*=10, p<.05

Table 2a

Cover page stories filed by Male and Female Journalists at Newsweek (in percent)

	Stories
Gender	
Female	4%
Male	25
Male/Female	71
Total	100%
	n=24

X^2 =16.07692, *df*=1, p<.05

Table 2b

Number of Cover Stories by Male and Female Journalists by year (in percent)

	Year					
	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995
Byline Sex						
Female	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Male	50	100	100	0	0	0
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=2	n=3	n=2	n=0	n=0	n=0

X^2 =2.83333, *df*=5, p>.05

*Male/Female bylines excluded

Table 2c

Cover page Stories by Male and Female Journalists by (In percent)

	Year					
	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995
Byline						
Female	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Male	25	75	50	0	0	0
Male/Female	50	25	50	100	100	100
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=4	n=4	n=4	n=4	n=4	n=4

X^2 =15.2, df=10, p>.05

Table 3a

Stories covered by Male and Female Journalists at Newsweek (in percent)

	Stories
Gender	
Female	14%
Male	64
Male/Female	22
Total	100%
	n=686

X^2 =755.49914, *df*=1, p<.05

Table 3b

Difference in Number of Stories covered by Male and Female Journalists by year (in percent)

	Year					
	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995
Byline						
Female	2%	11%	12%	23%	28%	27%
Male	98	89	88	77	72	73
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=56	n=125	n=89	n=79	n=79	n=101

X^2 =27.711724, *df*=5, p<.05

*Male/Female bylines excluded

Table 3c

Difference in Number of Stories covered by Male and Female Journalists by year (In percent)

	Year					
	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995
Byline						
Female	2%	10%	9%	15%	20%	22%
Male	93	77	61	50	51	60
Male/Female	5	14	30	35	29	18
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=59	n=149	n=127	n=121	n=111	n=123

X^2 =55.72, *df*=10, p<.05

Table 4a
Difference in Length of Stories by Male and Female Journalists at Newsweek by year (in percent)

	Year					
	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995
Gender						
Female	4%	12%	14%	22%	24%	26%
Male	96	88	86	78	76	74
Total	100% n=587	100% n=1,063	100% n=664	100% n=588	100% m=587	100% n=722

X^2 =166.22383, *df*=5, p<.05
*Male/Female stories excluded

Table 4b
Difference in Length of Stories covered by Male and Female Journalists at Newsweek by year (in percent)

	Year					
	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995
Gender						
Female	4%	10%	9%	13%	16%	20%
Male	84	75	54	45	49	57
Male/Female	13	14	37	42	35	24
Total	100% n=672	100% n=1,242	100% n=1,061	100% n=1,018	100% n=907	100% n=946

X^2 =553.09, *df*=10, p<.05

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Erik Ellis

WELCOME TO LILLIPUT: THE SHRINKING OF THE GENERAL INTEREST IN MAGAZINE PUBLISHING

> [*The New Yorker*] will print facts that it will have to go behind the scenes to get, but it will not deal in scandal for the sake of scandal, nor sensation for the sake of sensation. Its integrity will be above suspicion.
>
> Harold Ross in 1924 prospectus

> Who the readers are I really don't want to know. . . . I don't want to think about our readers as a 'market.' I don't want them to feel that they are just consumers to us. I find that obnoxious. . . . [*The New Yorker*] never published anything in order to sell magazines, to cause a sensation, to be controversial, to be popular or fashionable, to be 'successful.'
>
> William Shawn, 1983

> As an editor, I publish what I believe in. I assume others will like it, too.
>
> Robert Gottlieb, 1987

> You have to create a certain urgency in a magazine to compel people to buy it and read it. . . . the magazine basically skipped a generation and we have to get that generation back.
>
> Tina Brown, 1995

Introduction

The emergence of television in the 1960s as the premier national advertising medium did more than seal the demise of traditional general-interest magazines such as *Life*, *Look* and *The Saturday Evening Post*. It ushered in an era of unprecedented, industry-wide specialization so influential that it redefined our understanding of the "general interest." As publishers eschewed amorphous mass circulations in favor of meticulously carved market niches, the already slippery concept of the general interest underwent a profound transformation, one that stripped it of its long-standing implication that a general-interest magazine cannot exist without a relatively "general" audience. Insofar as the new, more permissive understanding of general interest vitiates public discourse and masks ulterior profit motives, it represents less an organic paradigm shift than a convenient rhetorical imposture. In order to fathom important paradoxes of magazine publishing—e.g., the deaths of the mass general-interest magazines at the height of their popularity, or the homogenous

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diversity of today's newsstands—one must try to unsnarl the general interest from its web of ambiguity and, in some cases, artifice. The challenge goes beyond contextualizing the nomenclature of an industry. Ultimately, such an inquiry helps reveal how magazines shape society as well as reflect it.

Overview: Specialization and the Decline of the General-Interest Magazine

A 1938 house ad in *Life* magazine features a close-up of four white hands reaching competitively for the latest issue lying on a mahogany coffee table. The caption explains, "*Life* time is excitement time in every home *Life* enters. It is eagerly awaited, avidly read, not by Father alone, or Mother alone, but by Son, Daughter, all the children, the *whole family*." [1] Despite the photograph's intimations of prosperity—the upscale decor, Dad's pipe on the table, the eagerness to consume—advertisers today would need to visit a homeless shelter to find a more demographically unappealing audience. In order for a publisher to sell such an ad these days, when streamlined reader profiles are as indispensable as ink, the ad would need to be repackaged as a derisive retro joke, the way broadcast journalists embellish reports about nuclear waste with black-and-white footage of straight-laced students ducking under desks, or the way health writers quote naïve discarded slogans for cigarettes or asbestos or butter. One look at the phrase "the whole family" and even the stuffiest advertising executive would sink to the floor laughing. Another lucrative way to modernize the ad would be to update its iconography. Wisps of demographic data could ornament the family's bare skin like wrinkles, bracelets, tattoos. A graphic artist could replace the jumbo issue of *Life* with a pertinent special-interest magazine, superimposing touches of affluence where appropriate—a Rolex on father, a fur sleeve on mother, glittery or rebelliously bitten fingernails on the kids. Instead of a pipe, the coffee table might exhibit a laser pointer or a remote control.

Think of *The Saturday Evening Post*, "the quintessential American mass-market magazine," [2] and chances are you'll think of Norman Rockwell's provincial cover portraits adorning bulky issues filled with patriotic editorials, inspirational essays and innocuous fiction—often tinged with a "Machiavellian paternalism" [3] yet always containing enough editorial variety, enough quality and accessibility, to make thoroughly credible the observation by *The New York Times* that the *Post*, of all magazines, had "more influence upon the cultural life of America than any other." [4] Etymologically, the very word "magazine"—from the French "magasin," meaning storehouse—[5] suggests a healthy diversity of content. This connotation is echoed by renowned magazine historian Frank Luther Mott, who defined a magazine as "a bound pamphlet issued more or less regularly . . . containing a variety of reading matter." [6]

It is ironic, then, that "specialization of content and audience . . . has become the mainstream of magazine publishing," according to magazine historian Dorothy Schmidt. [7] Experts often state that for every interest, there is a magazine. [8] Many experts attribute the decline of mass-circulation, general-interest magazines, and the corresponding rise of specialized ones, to the ability of television to deliver national audiences to advertisers more efficiently and cost-effectively. [9] The natural consequence of this technological and economic transformation, experts believe, was to force magazine publishers to exploit their medium's unique ability to target "niche" audiences, audiences whose demographic particularities attract advertisers in search of likely consumers. [10]

Whether you're a banker or a balloonist, a cartographer or a chocoholic, chances are there is at least one magazine, either on the shelf or on the way, tailored to your particular needs and interests. Specialized publications earn more than $14 billion a year in revenues, employ more than 50,000 people and can be divided into more than 200 distinct classifications. [11] They nearly tripled in number from 1963 to 1990. [12] A 1992 survey of advertising agency media directors revealed that 76.6 percent of respondents were defining target audiences more narrowly than just three years earlier. [13] Samir Husni, head of the magazine program at the University of Mississippi and distinguished chronicler of new magazines, estimates that at least 95 percent of new magazines are specialized. [14] More than 90 percent of all magazines are specialized. [15] Current titles include *Chocolatier*, *Kansas Nurse* and an array of large-circulation consumer magazines ranging from *Modern Bride* to *Modern Maturity*.

Specialization is expected to continue to define the industry in the years ahead. [16] According to the publishing director of Meigher Communications, "[T]he secret to a successful new magazine launch . . . is to fill a niche within a niche." [17] Another expert predicts, "Extreme specialization is definitely the wave of the future." [18]

But if there truly is a magazine for every interest, where does this leave the "general interest"? Does the concept even exist anymore? Is a general-interest magazine an oxymoron in an age when publications keep tabs on how many bowls of cereal their readers eat? Did the heyday of *Life*, *Look* and *The Saturday Evening Post* represent a golden age for the general interest, or were readers doing themselves and America a favor when they tossed their last issues on the Naugahyde recliner in the garage?

An inquiry into the history of general-interest magazines need not be a pointless exercise in reminiscence, any more than a survey of contemporary magazines need be a display of unbridled enthusiasm. A reflective look backward, if undertaken with an open mind and an honest heart, can become a refreshing look forward. In this respect, we need not apologize for asking: What has become of the "general interest"? How has it been defined in the context of the magazine industry? What are the philosophical assumptions framing our current understanding of the concept? What social implications follow?

Concepts of 'General Interest'

To appreciate the significant impact of specialization even upon what are today still called "general interest" magazines, one must understand the basic nature of the "general interest" as it has been applied to magazines past and present. "The ability to clearly identify trait patterns that distinguish one group of magazines from another is basic to systematic studies of magazines," writes Marcia Prior-Miller, a magazine scholar who examined 223 published research reports on magazines, in search of how investigators defined and classified magazine types. [19] Unfortunately, the preponderance of magazine research, to the extent that it is conducted in an intellectual vacuum and therefore nurtures a climate of permissiveness, distinguishes itself less for its clarity than for its incompatibility:

The lack of a clearly defined and empirically tested method for classifying non-newspaper

> periodicals is a problem that has theoretical and methodological implications central to the study of magazines as a medium of communication. . . . the majority of researchers assume that commonly used terms have single-valued, unambiguous meanings, when, in fact, the terms carry multiple meanings. . . . Researchers who design research using magazines need to give careful attention to reconciling and defining typological frameworks. [20]

Thus the first step in trying to decipher the nomenclature of the magazine industry is to acknowledge the fragmentation of most research. David Abrahamson, associate professor of Journalism in the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University, concludes that much historical magazine scholarship "includes neither broad historical interpretations of the sociocultural contexts nor detailed insights into the defining—and often competing—editorial and economic realities of the medium." [21] Although it is not within the scope of this project to pursue systematically any comprehensive or authoritative understanding of the general interest in the context of the magazine industry, it is nevertheless hoped that this inquiry will contribute to an improved knowledge of a provocative if evasive subject. Ultimately, the public, and not just the academic community, should benefit from analysis of the historical significance and the societal repercussions of the "general interest" in magazine publishing. [22]

In their infancy from 1893-1914—and indeed until the commercial ethos of television and demographics prevailed—popular American magazines "called themselves 'general interest because they were not intended for particular consumer subcultures or age groups and tried to appeal to a large audience of adult men and women," according to magazine historian Matthew Schneirov. [23] Before television provided advertisers with a more efficient and cost-effective way to reach a national audience, magazines were the only show in town and consequently did not need to carve market niches in order to survive. Advertisers required little more than raw numbers—the more readers, the more potential customers. Within the social constraints of the period, magazines could attract whatever readers they liked without fear of a backlash from advertisers. *The Saturday Evening Post*, for example, appealed to entire families and offered such a variety of articles within each issue that readers had a chance to learn about subjects completely unfamiliar to them. [24] The *Post*'s legendary editor, George Horace Lorimer, whose editing philosophy endured well after his death, [25] often published stories that he knew would appeal to only 10 percent of the readership. [26] His goal was nothing short of "a thorough democratizing of America." [27]

Lurking unmistakably beneath the noble veneer of Lorimer's vision of American democracy was the stipulation that this vision included only white, American-born middle-class readers—preferably conservative ones. [28] "Nobody pretended they tried to appeal to African-Americans or [other] minority groups," explains Don Ranly, head of the magazine program at the University of Missouri at Columbia. "It wasn't even in their consciousness. I don't think there was any possibility of them doing that and surviving. The readers would have left in droves, and advertisers also." [29]

Make no mistake about it, the quintessential *Saturday Evening Post*, warm impressions of Norman Rockwell aside, was at best a corncob's throw from unprejudiced utopia. Lorimer's persistent editorial rampages against immigration—not to mention his insistence that the magazine's fiction consist of, in his words, "clean, wholesome stories, fit for clean, wholesome people"—[30] demonstrate how he used the *Post* as a vehicle for propaganda. Upton Sinclair called the magazine "the great central power plant of Fascism in America," charging that its editors "raised up a school of writers, panoplied in prejudice, a lynching squad to deal with every sign of protest against the ideas of plutocracy." [31]

Although overtones of racist hegemony do nothing to bolster the claim that the classic *Post* embodied the general interest, it should be remembered that sociopolitical convictions now considered reprehensible were once routine. Racism was by no means confined to the pages of the *Post*, nor is it missing from today's magazines, however subtle its imprint. Even at the expense of an often dubious and homogenized national consciousness—a shortcoming one presumes does not inhere in the general interest—the *Post* and its counterparts possessed the lineaments of a well-intentioned egalitarianism. For example, Lorimer's prototypical "businessman" was, "above all else, an antidote to the idle rich," according to Lorimer biographer Janet Cohn. [32] The *Post* businessman could be found in a social spectrum that included not just the established professions, but clerks and even people selling chickens in their backyards. Such accommodating definitions are unheard of in today's era of business magazines aimed with laser precision at affluent corporate executives. [33]

Indeed, if it is true that the bygone blockbusters discriminated on the basis of race, it is equally true, and no less disconcerting, then and increasingly now, that magazines discriminate on the basis of class. Insofar as they predicate their appeal on the basis of personal financial well-being, and insofar as most minority groups are underrepresented among economic elites—not to mention in publishing—magazines today are a great deal more discriminatory than those of the past. "Since it's the people with the highest disposable incomes advertisers most want to reach," writes London School of Economics media scholar Williams Cole, "a high circulation in low-income neighborhoods usually doesn't translate into big ad dollars." [34] One wonders, then, which is more bigoted: a 1951 *Post* article conditionally critical of social injustices toward Latinos—"Usually their skin is the rich brown that blonds so often cultivate on the beach and sneer at on the street, when it is natural"—or the 1995 launch of a "general-interest" magazine (*Si*) whose editor says she is "micro-targeting to assimilated, affluent Latinos." [35] Furthermore, although the *Post* was never known for its progressive ideology, its appeal to a mass audience did guarantee a measure of editorial breadth, as glimpsed in this excerpt from an article published in 1913:

> Housework, as the ordinary small American household is conducted, is excessively stupid and irksome. No intelligent white man would submit to it a week without running amuck and shooting up the place. To see anything inspiring in mopping the floor, dusting the furniture, making the beds and washing the dishes requires a power of imagination that can not reasonably be expected of an ordinary female, since only a few extraordinary males have possessed it. [36]

Yet even allowing for the diversity within such mass magazines as the paradigmatic *Post*, today's tremendous variety of magazines—approximately 22,000 in the United States, according to one estimate—[37] suggests a vastly more inclusive matrix. "If the 'all-American' magazine is no longer feasible," writes historian Schmidt, "its place has been taken by magazines for all Americans." [38] Whereas a handful of powerful editors used to reflect and help fashion a sometimes very dubious "mass national consciousness," [39] today thousands of editors preside over magazines devoted to almost every conceivable interest. For example, minorities whose lives had for decades been reduced to stereotypes, if acknowledged at all, now operate their own flourishing outlets of cultural expression. Never before have so many previously neglected audiences achieved representation in print. "On the threshold of the twenty-first century," concludes magazine expert Michael Ryan, "American magazines are more varied than ever." [40] According to the University of Mississippi's Husni, "There are magazines for the left, the right, the center, you name it. There is a magazine for every part of the human body. There is a magazine—there is *more* than one magazine for every interest you can think of. If that's not diversity, I don't know what diversity is." [41]

Paradoxically, however, it is this unprecedented profusion of titles—more precisely, its configuration—that offers reason to question the magazines' ultimate contribution to society. Does the public genuinely benefit from this proliferation of periodicals? Browsing at row upon row of periodicals at one's local bookstore or library, one would certainly think so. Indeed, individual experience is likely to establish that any number of publications have proven useful, even invaluable, in gathering information for personal and professional use. But wishful thinking aside, a diversity of individual magazines does not in itself promote a diversely educated or even a diversely entertained citizenry, any more than an assortment of food in a grocery store ensures a well-balanced diet.

To be sure, readers of traditional general-interest magazines were similarly free to ignore material that did not correspond to their particular interests. *Post* subscribers in 1924, for example, could hardly have been expected to read, let alone relish, every word of the 21 serialized novels, 11 novellas and more than 200 short stories presented to them in that year. [42] The role of the magazine in American life has never been tantamount to that of the liberal-arts college—and never less so than now. "People were saying for a long time," says the University of Missouri's Ranly, "that the reason magazines are flourishing is because of an increase in leisure time. I've always pointed out that it's *exactly* the opposite: people have very little leisure time and they want to read only what interests them. They don't want to pay for anything else." [43]

But the built-in convenience of contemporary magazine publishing comes at a price. Instant gratification can effect shriveled worldviews. Social theorist Ben Agger argues that "inquisitive general readers, members of the public, have virtually disappeared" in favor of consumers. [44] Russell Jacoby, in *The Last Intellectuals*, concurs: "A general reading public may be no more." [45] Agger writes, "Modern magazines are plundered in the same way people rifle through racks of clothes at the mall; the articles are essentially interchangeable, requiring little attention . . ." [46]

Among other disadvantages, proclamations of the industry's diversity tend to obscure the fact that racial representation in magazine publishing leaves much to be desired. According to a recent report, "Although many magazine publishers and editors have expressed embarrassment about what everyone admits is a dismal record of hiring and retaining minorities, efforts to prod the industry into undertaking a baseline survey that would establish some employment benchmarks and help in the development of hiring goals have been soundly rebuffed." [47] *Village Voice* writer James Ledbetter writes:

> Under the best of circumstances, the print media's domination by whites would be a stain of dishonor. In today's political climate, the persistence of whiteness leaves the press ill-equipped to raise persuasive challenges to the accelerating attack on civil rights. It also corrodes credibility: the arrogance and denial that accompany discussion of race in publishing shed light on why the public holds the media in only slightly higher regard than it does used car salesmen. [48]

Researcher Katherine Fry concludes, "Race representations in the media have evolved, yet have retained a one-dimensional quality. This is in large part because the media institutions out of which they emerge are white, male-dominated corporations controlling representations with an eye toward sales." [49] The mere existence of minority publications—"separate but equal"?—should not obscure the fundamentally muted nature of minority voices in mainstream media. After all, "The inability to achieve a totalizing effect is the work of hegemony." [50]

Furthermore, some observers question the public-interest value of the majority of today's magazines. "Most [magazines] are devoted to recreation and consumerism," notes media critic Michael Parenti. "The diversity of publications, both serious and trivial, should not be mistaken for a plurality of ideas and ideologies, nor a wealth of political information." [51] Parenti argues:

> To think that information and viewpoints circulate in 'a free market of ideas' is to conjure up a misleading metaphor. A 'market' suggests a place of plenitude, with the consumer moving from stall to stall as at any bazaar, sampling and picking from an array of wares. But the existing media market of ideas is more like the larger economic market of which it is a part: oligopolistic and accessible mostly to those who possess vast amounts of capital. [52]

This argument implies that specialized magazines—whether devoted to brides or midwives, skateboarders or mechanics—are much too focused on lucrative micro-audiences to foster the kind of broad cumulative understanding necessary to the successful operation of a democracy. [53] Sociologist Todd Gitlin writes in *Dissent*,

> [J]ust because mobs are not knocking on corporate doors "demanding" serious work—any more than mid-nineteenth-century hordes beat on Herman Melville's door "demanding" a fat novel about a white whale—does not mean that our culture can thrive without the difficult, the demanding, the true, and the beautiful. . . . The newsstand that offers a profusion of skiing, running, dressing, and model-railroad magazines alongside a thin display of magazines of ideas and opinions is not a tribute to the universal cornucopia of the marketplace—it has accepted easy marketability as the prime criterion for display. [54]

From this perspective, the magazine industry, however meaningfully diverse on the surface, can be seen as promulgating an essentially insular worldview, or, more accurately, a conglomeration of insular worldviews.

Moreover, magazine scholarship rarely addresses, let alone elucidates, the social consequences of specialization. [55] Abrahamson offers a partial explanation for this neglect: "The principle reason for this [restrictive] approach is that in most instances media scholars have generally chosen to study magazines as isolated journalistic artifacts, rather than as interesting products and catalysts of social, cultural and economic change." [56]

Other experts counter that it is unrealistic, and always has been, to expect magazines to serve as quasi-public institutions. Scholar Lee Jolliffe argues that "the social responsibility of magazines to present a broad, unbiased, whole-world view is an arguable premise, even for those who hold newspapers to such a standard. From their inception in the U.S., magazines have generally been created to serve specific audiences and particular advertiser categories." [57] Similarly, the University of Missouri's Ranly argues that "the magazine industry has *never* had a great number of thought magazines. They have *never* had more than a half dozen successful magazines that in any way dealt with anything serious. When you're talking about a diversity of ideas and the marketplace of ideas, you're really talking about social and political issues. How many [magazines] are there [that address such issues]?" [58]

Whatever their role or roles in American society, [59] magazines are becoming more and more specialized. To understand the depths of their exclusiveness, little need be said of the thousands of ultra-specialized (trade or industry) magazines like *Hogs Today*, which, "rather than seeking to expand their readership, hone them down into elite cadres of loyal followers with both the willingness and the wherewithal to consume goods they advertise." [60] More revealing is an examination of how even today's so-called general-interest magazines are circumscribed by the demands of the publishing world.

Whereas general-interest magazines in the pre-television, pre-demographics age experimented with editorial material aimed at a variety of audiences, [61] thereby promoting if not always achieving a diversity of readers as well as a diversity of content, today "even most of the so-called mass consumer magazines have [either] narrowed their audiences down to smaller proportions" [62] or "have large circulations, but appeal to a specific audience or interest." [63] Mississippi's Husni explains, "What we are seeing now is more of a trend toward a return of the general-interest magazine. The only difference is, this time it's returning with a twist—it's returning with a very specific audience in mind." [64] In other words, today's general-interest magazines, whose ancestors tried more or less to construct "a national editorial appeal that aimed to exclude narrow prejudices of region, race, class, creed, and party," [65] now succeed to the extent to which they exclude all but choice slices of the population. [66]

In order to unravel the dichotomy between traditional and contemporary understandings of "general interest," one may contrast the old and new incarnations of *Life*, which folded in 1972 and was restarted in 1978. Henry Luce, the magazine's founder, insisted on keeping the price of the magazine "within reach of the broad audience he felt sure was fascinated with pictures," writes Loudon Wainright. [67] In a 1936 prospectus, Luce wrote that *Life* readers would be "never quite sure they won't get a whacking surprise." [68] One historian concludes, "The subject matter of [the original] *Life*'s imaginative photographers and intrepid reporters was, in fact, limitless." [69] When *Life* was rejuvenated, by contrast, its new managing editor, Patricia Ryan—fresh from *People*—had a much crisper conception of audience. "I see an enormous niche for us," she said, "between news magazines and People." [70] One advertising-agency executive called the remodeled magazine "a general-interest magazine for an upscale audience." [71] Thus, in a transformation of identity representative of the industry as a whole, *Life* abandoned its search for a broad audience, choosing instead to angle for an upscale niche. [72]

According to a *Saturday Evening Post* archivist at that similarly revived and attenuated magazine, one whose legendary editor once threw a prominent advertiser out of his office at the mere suggestion of a now-standard "tie-in": [73] "Even though today's magazine emphasizes health and nutrition, it is still a general-interest publication." [74] In this estimation, one sees again a distinctly modern conception of "general interest," one vastly more accommodating and adaptable than the old. In an era dominated by magazines of unparalleled specificity, when the knob on the microscope has been turned securely to the position of utmost magnification, a magazine that would have been declared a veritable paramecium of esoterica 40 years ago acquires the versatile costume of a chameleon.

Whether a result of public-relations nostalgia or, more charitably, the balance-tipping linguistic influence of specialization, this permissive reasoning, that a magazine can be "general interest" despite its face-value appeal to a market niche, permeates the industry. *Consumer Magazine and Agri-Media Source* lists 81 entries under "general editorial," including such titles as *Archaeology*, *Ebony* and *National Enquirer*. [75] *The Standard Periodical Directory* lists 272 publications for the U.S. and Canada under "general interest," including *BUZZ: The Talk of Los Angeles*, *Might Magazine* ("general interest for 'Generation X'") and *Tabloid Tattler* ("for people who want to know what's happening in the tabloids but shun the publicity of buying or reading the publications at the checkout stand"). [76] It does not require undue perfectionism to suspect that the editors of these directories shoveled so many titles into the "general" category more for the sake of convenience than applicability. Even so, the closer one examines the modern use of "general interest," the more one comes to differentiate between traditional and modern understandings of the concept.

Reader's Digest is another example of a magazine that cannot, in any traditional sense, "truly be considered a national, mass-market or popular magazine." [77] Compared to other consumer magazines, *Reader's Digest*, with a circulation of more than 15 million, [78] does in fact publish stories "as varied as all human experience," as claimed by former editor Kenneth O. Gillmore. [79] But scrutiny reveals shortcomings in this claim. For example, consider the magazine's ideological constraints. True, the magazine achieved international popularity using founder DeWitt Wallace's "magic formula of self-help, human interest, and conservative politics." [80] In this respect, one could argue that the magazine, far from scrapping an unprejudiced tradition, has instead merely seen its long-standing political convictions laid bare. Although this assessment is true up to a point, it is important to acknowledge that political views now considered unconscionable were once second nature. Besides, ideological litmus tests, by their very nature, water down whatever historical claim *Reader's Digest* might have had to the designation "general interest." Even if Wallace's own rhetoric seems impossibly unstudied and apolitical—"I simply hunt for things that interest me, and if they do, I print them"—[81] his editorial credo of independence was in any case not bequeathed to his successors. In 1982, Gillmore's predecessor was fired despite his popularity among staff and readers, for reasons evidently relating to his willingness to publish articles critical of the Reagan administration. [82] One such article criticized the administration for gutting the Environmental Protection Agency; another criticized political action committees, of which *Reader's Digest* has its own. The latter article, hardly a merciless stand-alone exposé, was accompanied by a counterargument written by a Republican senator from Idaho, a strident defense of PACs that "cites the United Auto Workers' PAC as an example of undue influence but makes no mention of corporate PACs." [83] In addition to these facts, Gillmore was hired by the business side of the magazine, "a precedent which many feared boded ill for the traditional preeminence of the editorial side." [84] Further calling into question the notion that *Reader's Digest* publishes articles "as varied as all human experience" is the fact that, far from rolling out one big welcome mat to a variety of readers, the magazine, written at a 6th- or 7th-grade level, [85] primarily targets demographically attractive women in their late 40s. [86]

In fairness, as indicated earlier, the bygone counterparts of today's large-circulation, "general-interest" magazines were never exemplary monuments to editorial democracy. For one to conjure utopian visions of a past that didn't exist "courts the glorification of all sorts of class, race and gender inequalities." [87] For example, consider the two-page house advertisement in a 1938 issue of *Life*. Opposite a large photograph of five slick-haired white men, presumably advertising executives, huddling importantly in the office of a Manhattan skyscraper, we are presented with the vague findings of the magazine's Continuing Study of Magazine Audiences: "The Biggest Advertising News in 25 Years!" [88] The text assures potential advertisers that their messages, if communicated in the pages of *Life*, will reach "the major share of the people who are worth reaching at all." [89]

But, for all its shortcomings, the fact remains that the *Post* was the voice of its editor, not the mouthpiece of its business manager. [90]

Many more examples of modern "general interest" magazines, as well as admittedly specialized ones, illustrate the same point: the rhetoric is inclusive, the audience exclusive.

Consider *Allure*, launched at a New York cocktail party. The publisher explained, "Allure is edited to reflect sensibilities rather than demographics." [91] Added the editor, "We're interested in all women, from seventeen to seventy." Unfortunately, these conscientious assertions do not withstand scrutiny. Take the editor's claim that "[i]n certain circumstances, all women are in the same boat and need the same information." Just what are these circumstances? What kind of information? "We're going to be the reality check," the editor said, "reporting the news, analyzing the trends and revealing the facts"—so far so good—"about cosmetics, fragrance, skin and hair care." Oh. Recent cover articles include "Hot Lips: Colors with Bite" and "Sexy Skirts and Sweaters." One wonders if "all women"—e.g., grandmothers and feminists—would benefit from such reportage. "I can't believe [the editor and publisher] are very serious," says the University of Missouri's Ranly. "I think they would be embarrassed if low-income people bought their magazine." [92]

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Similarly, with *Bride's* the title alone discloses a narrow audience. The magazine falls well short of and indeed largely contradicts the traditional definition of general-interest: popular and, in the words of expert Leslie Bennetts, "designed for both men and women and not about a single particular subject." [93] Nevertheless, *Bride's* seems to fancy itself a renaissance vehicle for the communication of "[l]iterally any idea," according to its editor. [94] Any idea, that is, so long as the latitude of expression tip-toes no further than "from fixing a clogged sink to caring for a pet." As if these words were insufficient in themselves to narrow the pool of potential writers (and readers), the editor adds, "But [the idea] must be tailored to newlyweds." Out the window, presumably, go manuscripts detailing the likelihood of divorce or the misplaced love of matrimonial rituals of commodification—not to mention "literally any idea" unassociated with newlyweds.

As Russell Jacoby states in *The Last Intellectuals*, "The free-lance writer"—and therefore the uncompromising reader—"is at the mercy of a market, which . . . supports less and less serious and general prose. To suggest a piece on the hobbies or exercising regime of a celebrity might draw an editor's interest; to propose an article on the urban crisis would draw a blank." [95] A closer look at the business of freelance writing supports this analysis.

If you hope to publish an article in a large-circulation magazine today, the evidence suggests you should first dismiss as antiquated gibberish any notion that most editors and readers welcome writing on subjects unfamiliar to them. To be sure, many editors are the first to wax rhapsodic on the spectacular array of topics covered in their publications. In many cases, it would be impolitic for them to claim anything less. But even if editors believe this claim down to their souls, research suggests they prefer aspiring contributors willing to disregard the advice of writing expert William Zinsser: "Don't try to guess what sort of thing editors want to publish or what you think the country is in a mood to read. Editors and readers don't know what they want to read until they read it. Besides, they're always looking for something new." [96] In fact, many editors today argue that there are no new ideas, merely the same ones regurgitated with fresh "angles." [97] Likewise, most magazine writers no longer seem to write with the general-interest understanding that "great editing, like great leadership, consists in appealing to what's best in us, not in letting us wallow happily in the mush." [98] Legendary *Atlantic/Harper's* editor Frederick Lewis Allen observed in 1945: "There are a great many readers, people who might become readers, who want the soothing, the specious, the innocuous, the easy; and smart editors with just the right gift for reaching the popular mind can make thumping successes by diligently pleasing these people." [99] One critic concludes, "Nothing makes serious journalists unhappier than the notion that readers will get what they want." [100] Former *New Yorker* editor William Shawn addressed this paradox in 1983:

> Now the whole idea is that you edit for a market and if possible design a magazine with that in mind. Now magazines aren't started with the desire for someone to express what he believes. I think the whole trend is so destructive and so unpromising so far as journalism is concerned that it's very worrisome. Younger editors and writers are growing up in that atmosphere. "We want to edit the magazine to give the audience what they want. What do we give them?" There is a fallacy in that calculation. . . . The fallacy is if you edit that way, to give back to the readers only what they think they want, you'll never give them something new they didn't know about. You stagnate. . . . The whole thing begins to be circular. The new tendency is to discourage this creative process and kill originality. We sometimes publish a piece that I'm afraid not more than one hundred readers will want. Perhaps it's too difficult, too obscure. But it's important to have. That's how people learn and grow. This other way is bad for our entire society and we're suffering from it in almost all forms of communications. [101]

As for writers who wish to express themselves, one successful free-lancer cautions, "That's fine if your writing is a labor of love and nothing more, but you might have a hard time finding a market for your work." [102] Adds the author of a textbook for aspiring free-lancers, "Your goal is to satisfy the reader's needs, and to do so, you must know him as you would a friend." [103] In the field of magazine journalism education, one researcher observes that "magazines are not seen as medium of communication but simply as markets to which students can sell a commodity—their articles." [104]

If you want to be published in magazines today, editors urge you to "adapt your work to your market"; [105] you must be "highly amenable to taking direction"; [106] you "have to be willing to do what's best for the magazine, and that includes having your 'voice' toyed with"; [107] "one of your prime concerns must be matching your topic with your market's audience"; [108] you should consider joining the successful free-lancers who "have narrowed their writing down to a couple of topics." [109] In short, "Realize that magazine publishing is a business like any other; no editor is going to lay out the publisher's dough unless you can give the magazine what it wants." [110]

These days, notwithstanding panoramic definitions of "general interest," editors and publishers want exclusive material for exclusive audiences. This is nearly as true for *The Atlantic* and *Harper's* magazines "for what is presumed to be the intellectual elite," [111] as it is for *Self* and *Celebrity Crosswords*. A senior editor of *The Atlantic* states, "We are consciously a general-interest magazine." [112] Yet he also calls the magazine's readers "very well educated," a fact that disqualifies it as general interest in the more rigorous, traditional sense. After all, a magazine cannot plausibly be considered "general" interest when the vast majority of interested readers belong to a precise socio-economic class. Certainly *The Atlantic* and *Harper's*, along with such excellent and far-reaching publications as *The Utne Reader* and *Salmagundi*, contain a diversity of content. But even if one charitably assumes that this content straddles political boundaries and otherwise defies categorization, the question of narrow readership remains. Compare *The Saturday Evening Post*: "Intellectually," writes Lorimer biographer Jan Cohn, "as a general-interest magazine printing both fiction and nonfiction on a wide variety of subjects, [the *Post*] was designed to reach audiences ignored by 'highbrow' magazines like *Harper's* and the *Atlantic*." [113] Even more highbrow than *The Atlantic* is *Harper's*, which *Media Decisions* magazine has classified, understandably, as a special-interest publication. [114] According to *Harper's* editor Lewis Lapham, the magazine's "penetration into the elite markets of journalists and opinion-makers is unexcelled": 77 percent of readers are college graduates and 39 percent have graduate degrees. [115] However laudable the inclusiveness of their contents, however disproportionately great their cultural influence [116] and however persuasive Lapham's argument that "[t]he general interest also happens to be the public or common interest," [117] these magazines, insofar as they appeal to exclusive elites, can never hope to achieve anything resembling Lorimer's well-intentioned if misguided vision of "a thorough democratizing of America."

In a telling example of how the term "general interest" has been massaged into an amorphous lump of clay, consider a statement by magazine authority Husni. Whereas the editorial philosophy of *Look*, for example, encompassed "coverage of interests for every member of the family: human relations, babies, money, animals, sports, crime exposés, national and international events; indeed all spheres of human activity." [118] Husni concludes with apparent insouciance, "We can still have some general-interest magazines like Lear's, where you have articles on fashion and cars and money. But unless you are a rich woman over 40, you are not their audience. To have the combination of general interest and general audience, this will be the dinosaur of the industry." [119]

Historical and Economic Comparative Analysis

Since Benjamin Franklin started his short-lived *General Magazine* in 1741, [120] American magazines have stood on precarious footing. [121] "The expectation of failure is connected with the very name Magazine," Noah Webster wrote in 1788. [122] Today, only between 10 percent [123] and 50 percent [124] of new magazines will survive past the first year, and their chances of success diminish thereafter. [125]

But this high mortality rate is just one component of a historically dynamic industry. By comparing the two major historical changes in the life of American magazines—the "magazine revolution" at the turn of the century, and specialization in the 1960s—we can evaluate their causes and consequences with an eye toward understanding their inevitability and judging their social implications.

The so-called magazine revolution that occurred during the final decade of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th saw the arrival and proliferation of mass-circulation, general-interest national magazines, magazines that transformed communications by becoming "the first dominant discursive medium of mass culture in American history" and "a potent force in shaping the consciousness of millions of Americans." [126] Many causes contributed to the birth of the popular American magazine, including technological innovations; [127] entrepreneurial editors and publishers; [128] improved distribution systems; [129] increasing education among the middle class; [130] postwar industrialization; [131] and lower postal rates. [132] Most importantly, experts agree, the magazine revolution went hand in hand with an advertising revolution, the spark of which occurred in 1893 when Frank Munsey dropped the price of *Munsey's* from a quarter to a dime—well below the cost of production—thereby skyrocketing circulation and earning huge profits from advertisers eager to sell to a nationwide audience. [133] Soon even most traditional "quality" publications realized that their reliance on circulation revenue was impossible to sustain, and they began to solicit advertisements. [134]

But far from signaling a wholesale collapse of editorial independence, the magazine revolution proved "a mutually beneficial relationship between the periodical and advertising industries," according to magazine historians John Tebbel and Mary Ellen Zuckerman. [135] For one thing, the new paradigm sparked the muckraking movement, [136] which saw its socially responsible heyday from 1903 to 1910. [137] "Never before or since," claims Ryan, "have magazines had such a direct, sustained, and dramatic effect on American society." [138] If it is true that the greedy jingle of wealth in publishers' ears contributed to the demise of muckraking, [139] then it is equally true that the movement's fate did not spell the doom of editorial integrity. For example, many of the industry's most legendary editors—including Frank Crowninshield of *Vanity Fair*, [140] George Horace Lorimer, [141] Henry Luce, [142] Harold Ross [143] and DeWitt Wallace—[144] nurtured the mass-circulation magazine in a climate of such autonomy that "they created a format and a style for their publications that was seemingly fixed for eternity. . . . their readership was never an elite." [145] It used to be that the publisher of *Time* was not even allowed on the magazine's editorial floor without permission from the managing editor. [146] Similarly, *The New Yorker* distinguished so zealously between editorial and advertising that the separation grew to be known as one of "church and state," [147] creating a climate of "complete editorial independence." [148] Famed *Saturday Evening Post* publisher Cyrus Curtis once told a meeting of advertisers that the notion of magazines existing for readers was "an illusion" and that "the real reason, the publisher's reason, is to give you people who manufacture things that American women want and buy a chance to tell them about your products." [149] Just the same, Curtis established in 1910 "The Curtis Advertising Code," which "excluded all advertising which intended to defraud or which was extravagantly worded." [150] Overall, Curtis gave Lorimer "complete freedom to develop the magazine; that was part of his genius." [151]

By contrast, the rise of specialization—the survivalist art of "finding little niches of alleged demand and exploiting them"—[152] made the relationship between editors and advertisers arguably more incestuous than harmonious. [153] It is true, as Tebbel notes, that advertising was "the lifeblood of the new wave of magazines" during the magazine revolution, and that "the most significant change in the business at the turn of the century was the conversion of periodicals from purely personal enterprises, for the most part, to business institutions." [154] In this respect, editors back then needed to attract advertising as much as they do today—indeed more so, considering that a much higher percentage of revenue then came from advertising than from circulation. [155] But this simplistic parallel—the profit motive—overlooks the almost antithetical implications underlying the two historical milieus.

Whereas magazines before the era of specialization lured advertisers with large circulations consisting of relatively diverse audiences, thus serving the public *qua* public, post-specialization magazines, as researcher Benjamin Compaine observes, "serve the need of advertisers who wish to reach a well-defined audience for their product or service." [156] This is not to sugar-coat the past or to suggest that magazines today don't serve readers. Rather, it is simply to point out the diametric social consequences of the profit motive then and now. Although specialization happened for a number of reasons, including professionalization [157] and social fragmentation in the 1960s, [158] one scarcely debatable result was the *further* splintering of the public into a multitude of niches. According to the executive director of one specialized publication, "Unless demographics support a publication, an advertiser won't go for it." [159] This calculation is echoed by two communication scholars: "Without [demographic] data, the audience has no reality for advertisers and, consequently, no value (or, at least, greatly reduced value to a 'known' audience). And, if the audience has no value, the medium will not attract advertiser support." [160]

Responding to this economic imperative, one critic states:

> If you suggest to those who promote [specialization] that the notion of fundamental differences between groups of people arbitrarily divided by age, sex or race comes very close to the ideas sustaining Nazism and apartheid they are outraged. . . . Though it may be done in the name of greater concern for all, the business of splitting the audience up according to preconceived social criteria is actually dreadfully condescending. [161]

Even an editorial practice as seemingly spontaneous and irreproachable as the magazine testimonial merits skepticism. One would hope it would be merely reasonable, not naïve, to expect a testimonial to originate from sincere admiration, not from the enticement of a quid pro quo. Yet in an issue of *Folio: The Magazine for Magazine Management*, the president of a consulting and marketing firm informs editors and publishers,

> All participants enjoy shared benefits and mutual advantages from a testimonial program, which can turn complimentary statements [from authoritative individuals] into bottom-line profits. . . . Through your questions and suggestions, you can encourage each participant to focus on a different benefit. This ensures that all the benefits on your wish list will be featured. . . . testimonials that show successful ads are more likely to encourage the participation of advertisers who know that their ad will be showcased free of charge—even if it is in the interests of promoting your magazine. [162]

Although it would be extreme to attribute this brand of opportunism directly to the legacy of specialization, it can be argued that such editorial impostures do go hand in hand with specialization to the extent that magazines require not only the "right" readers but the "right" recommenders with the "right" message.

Was Specialization Inevitable?

But lest we shrug our shoulders at the problematic financial underpinnings of today's magazines, it is useful to check resignation—defeatism if you prefer—with analysis. One way to understand the prevailing market ethos is to examine the premise that specialization was inevitable in light of the emergent popularity of television. If it was, there is less reason to question the bottom-line motives and slice-and-dice strategies of today's editors and publishers, who could be exonerated in their resourceful conceptions of "general interest" as the hapless inheritors of a whooshing capitalist destiny, a teleological tailspin toward fragmentation. If specialization was not inevitable, we can consider adding cynicism and disingenuousness to an already trenchant critique of an industry whose logic has helped spawn, in the words of essayist Roger Rosenblatt, "an overspecialized country where people are broken into so many niches that they are not recognizable as part of a general intelligence, a general soul." [163]

It would be naïve to deny or underestimate the already discussed significance of television in specializing the industry. Clearly the connection is strong. At the same time, there is reason to complicate this explanation with additional inquiry. For example, there is the question of reader dissatisfaction with mass-circulation, general-interest magazines. If television in fact lured national advertisers away from what had been for more than a century the only national medium, [164] thus contributing to the magazines' decline and fall, presumably it did so in large part because audiences, too, preferred the new visual medium. [165] But why should the two media—even granting their similarities—be any more mutually exclusive than movie theaters and VCRs? Today we have *People* magazine (and clones), modeled after television, [166] and we have TV "magazine" programs; [167] movies appear on TV and TV programs routinely mutate to the big screen. So why should mass general magazines disappear with the advent of television?

In order to substantiate the smoldering implication that the general-interest magazine bowed to television like a lame-duck politician bowing to a superior rival, one would naturally look at the circulation figures of these magazines at the time they ceased publication. One would expect to see shrunken circulations representing lost audiences. But the numbers are surprising. *Collier's* folded in 1959 with a circulation of four million; [168] *Look* in 1971 with seven million plus; [169] *Life* in 1972 with between 5.5 million [170] and more than seven million; [171] *The Saturday Evening Post* in 1969 with 3.5 million (this after "eliminating three million subscribers en route to a '"class instead of mass"' audience"); [172] and other mass general magazines vanished during times of similar popularity.

One could dismiss the curiosity of these astonishing circulation figures—and even higher readership figures considering pass-along readers—[173] by arguing that they are unrepresentative or "inauthentic" in the sense that few people, however tepid their actual interest, could pass up what were such bargain subscriptions—[174] often five times less than the cost of production. [175] But one could make the same case, with equal irrelevance, about television—i.e., not every viewer of (free) high-ratings programs necessarily watches with enthusiasm. Notwithstanding the mechanistic demographic appraisals of modern advertising agencies "constantly vigilant as to the changing capacity of a given journal—or radio or television program—to deliver an audience, the *right* audience," [176] the fact remains that millions of people were paying for these publications when they died. This is not to dismiss the established influence of television. Certainly with TV "winking its primacy and power day and night in 97 per cent of homes around the country" by 1969, [177] [178] subscribers to these magazines could hardly be expected to devote as much time to reading them as they had before. Still, the fallacious principle of mutual exclusivity remains, as do the circulation figures themselves.

But if dissatisfied readers were not responsible for the death of these magazines, who was?

The answer defies finger-pointing. In one sense the answer *is* finger-pointing. When television achieved dominance as a magnet for advertisers in search of mass national audiences—an organic, technological shift—[179] mass general-interest magazines could no longer rely on advertising drawn from big circulations. [180] It wasn't that advertising disappeared—in 1961 advertisers contributed $837 million to magazines—but in light of extremely unprofitable subscriptions even this seemingly impressive contribution wasn't enough to offset losses. [181] Thus an altogether different logic came to predominate: magazines needed to "find their niche or prepare for a continuing fallout in advertising." [182] Popularity no longer meant prosperity, a paradox that disproved the common assumption "that if enough people care enough about a publication or a television program to buy it or to turn to it, advertisers will beat a path to their doorway." [183]

In fact, many magazines in the era of specialization deliberately trim "waste" or "fringe" circulation—readers hard to hook and/or unlikely to consume advertised goods and services—because it introduces "bad demographics" [184] [185]. "The rationale," writes magazine historian Dorothy Schmidt, "is to guarantee the advertiser a committed high-quality reader and audience for advertising." [186] Publishers shoo away unwanted readers by refusing to solicit subscription renewals and by raising the cover and/or subscription price, a tactic that Hearst Magazine president

D. Claesy Bahrenburg says results in the "natural elimination of marginal circulation." [187] One industry guidebook, *Managing Magazine Publishing*, classifies "A" readers as "those who **must** read the magazine to give it the 'quality' demanded by advertisers" [emphasis in original]; at the bottom of the scale are "fringe interests," who are one notch below non-essential "C" readers, "those who would benefit from the magazine but don't buy enough to interest advertisers." [188]

Accordingly, "most magazines have cut back on expensive fringe circulation" [189] and "many magazines have repositioned [by reducing circulation] to attract upscale readers and advertisers." [190] [191] In *The Journal of Advertising*, two experts argue that the further elimination of "waste circulation"—and the corresponding ability to give advertisers what *Adweek* calls "a more valuable audience"—[192] is one of the most encouraging prospects of the anticipated age of advanced credit-history marketing, one that "puts the customer in control" [193] by applying the matchmaking methodology of computer-dating services, the goal being to wed consumer to advertiser. (Along these same cynical lines, one critic notes that "the more deeply a magazine involves a reader and the more time a magazine compels him to spend with it, the fewer readers-per-copy may result—and hence, other things being equal, the fewer ads." [194]) "In short," write magazine historians Tebbel and Zuckerman, "circulation was now being defined not as how many people read a magazine but rather who they were." [195]

Thus we can answer the question, Was specialization inevitable?, with a stringently qualified yes. Mass general magazines did wither inevitably in large part because of television. But the true culprit turned out to be an organic, invisible one: the transformed nature of advertising. One study concludes that "the technological advancements in audience information availability coupled with the market's increased emphasis on audience segmentation paved the way for the growth of more specialized magazines with more narrowly defined audiences." [196] In the case of *The Saturday Evening Post*,

> Norman Rockwell and *Post* fiction writers were not themselves the anachronisms, presumably time-locked several decades behind their audience. The problem, rather, was that their traditional rural audience still existed, nearly seven million strong, and in the eyes of the advertisers had in fact become a liability insofar as it was not composed of what the ad men would call "quality consumers"—that is, the young, urban, and, most importantly, affluent readers. The *Post* in 1961 and even in 1968 was fulfilling a function; it was serving a large

> and loyal audience, and had been doing so for the longest time in American magazine history. But the competition into which the advertisers forced the *Post*, that for the "quality consumer," was one in which the *Post* was, by the nature of its audience, at a disadvantage. To shy away from such competition meant financial disaster, but to engage it meant changing the character of the magazine and appealing to a new base of readers. [197]

The gist of this analysis applies not only to the *Post* but to other mass general magazines that found themselves facing the same economic precipice. [198] One critic concludes that "not one of the [the moribund mass magazines] gave up or changed because readers found them wanting. Advertising fads changed. The books were so heavily burdened with expensive circulation built to attract advertising that they simply had to change or quit." [199] Couched in more polemical terms:

> In the 1960s national magazines like *Life*, *Look*, and the *Saturday Evening Post* actually gained circulation when they became more socially conscious and dealt with important issues. Yet they died at the height of their popularity because of the competing appeal of television as an *advertising* conduit. The fate of the national magazines was not determined by what the public wanted but by where the corporate advertisers wanted to put their money. [200]

Consequently, "every big-time editor is now also a de facto publisher, judged as much on ad linage and circulation as on innovation or content—or more." [201]

Exclusivity

At the philosophical core of the industry, then, is the same exclusivity—some would say elitism—rampant among individual magazines. However expedient and ostensibly appropriate it may be to applaud the industry's "diversity," public culture diminishes to the extent that capitalism demands essentialist magazines "in which parties of like-minded sentiment speak chiefly to themselves." [202] Again, the era of the *Post* provides no prelapsarian counterpoint to today's discordant paradigm. But even at the expense of conservatism [203] and mediocrity, [204] at least that era's brand of homogeneity had an egalitarian edge and sought fundamentally to unite people rather than divide them. [205] Thus the "eclipse of the big general magazines, such as *Look* and *Life*" not only "registers a parcellation of a once homogeneous public," [206] but also creates magazines that "have become so specialized in targeting homogeneous segments of the population . . . that they may no longer even fit the traditional definitional requirements that mass-media channels appeal to a heterogeneous mass audience." [207]

But such facts do not prevent contemporary magazines from using the dizzying dots and stripes of skin-deep diversity to camouflage their fundamental elitism. In fact, a strong case can be made that a seemingly unassuming magazine like *Family Circle*, for example, is more elitist than the bygone giants or even the so-called "quality" magazines—elitist not in the sense of social snobbery, but in the no less applicable sense of exclusivity of content and/or audience. Compare *The Saturday Evening Post*, which "appealed to the whole family, rather than a single role in society, and necessarily had to be broader in content than *Family Circle*. Its format allowed for greater variety and range of interest in its articles, and there was for the reader a chance to learn about some subject he had never before encountered." [208] *Family Circle*, for all its useful self-affirmation and recipes, and despite its editor's claim that she "can't think of a subject of general interest we wouldn't do," [209] is one of many magazines that reflects "the preoccupation with self, and with individuals generally rather than issues or events." [210] According to Betty Friedan, author of *The Feminist Mystique*, younger women today "simply don't buy the limited image that is still there [in women's magazines]—an image that seems to say, 'Well, all right, she works, but she really is only interested in the home,' or 'She may be more than 40, but she wants to pretend she's still 25.' It's an inability to grasp the totality of the personhood of women." [211]

Granting the limited contents and audience of *Family Circle*, isn't it extreme to call the magazine more elitist than prestigious publications like *The New Yorker*? Not so, suggests magazine historian George Douglas, who argues that the original *New Yorker*, *Vanity Fair*, *Esquire* and *The Smart* Set—one can extrapolate others—"were always general magazines intended to reach a sizable audience. . . . Their appeal to an elite was always something of a mannerism, an affectation; they were and needed to be 'commercial.'" [212] To claim otherwise, this reasoning insists, would be tantamount to missing the tongue-in-cheek humor in Harold Ross's statement, "We don't run our magazine for dumbbells." [213] Further debunking illusions of snobs in fur coats and top hats are the facts that so-called upscale publications contain great vicarious appeal, and that they count on readers with modest incomes who occasionally, even often, consume *as if* they were affluent. [214]

Finally, we must differentiate between the content of *Family Circle* and, say, *Harper's*. Although *Harper's* appeals to a more elite audience—in 1983 the magazine more than halved its circulation by way of streamlining—[215] its astonishing variety of content ensures that it makes "an incalculable contribution to our cultural life." [216] *Family Circle*, by contrast, makes an incalculable contribution to society's ability to "Savor Saucy Meat Loaf and other $uper-$mart Fare." [217]

Conclusion

A number of experts worry that as magazines continue to specialize, the bonds of common culture and democracy will fray, shared historical understanding will vanish and entire neighborhoods—"the wrong neighborhoods"—[218] will stand ignored because appealing to their residents is considered "throwing away money on poor circulation." [219] [220] Even assuming at least one magazine for every interest, "diversity of supply does not guarantee what might be called 'diversity of consumption.' . . . If increasing diversity of content means that each individual is actually exposed to less diversity of expression, it's hard to see how such a result facilitates the marketplace of ideas." [221] [222]

Although the demise of the traditional general-interest mass-circulation magazines was economically inevitable, to say so and leave it at that suggests that they withered with at most the culminating lamentation of a shrug. A just obituary must address not only the extreme popularity of these magazines at the time they died, but also the dire economic predicament that killed them. Popularity no longer meant prosperity, a paradox that forced editors and publishers to carve niches or coffins.

As we have seen, niche magazines—both trade and consumer—have conquered the industry, exerting their influence so extensively as to redefine the concept of "general interest." Under the traditional model, as we have seen, a general-interest magazine was "designed for both men and women and not about a single particular subject." [223] Under the contemporary model, says Husni, a general-interest magazine is "any magazine that's aimed toward a specific or general audience covering more than one specific topic." [224] Although the distinction between these two concepts may not immediately suggest a major overhaul, one should not underestimate their dissonance. The former concept stipulates that without wide public appeal, a magazine cannot be considered general interest. The latter concept is willing to consider a magazine general interest even if it targets a narrow audience. Husni explains: "What we are seeing now is more of a trend toward a return of the general-interest magazine. The only difference is, this time it's returning with a twist—it's returning with a very specific audience in mind."

Coinciding as it did with the undemocratic advance of specialization, this modern understanding of "general interest" warrants close scrutiny. If "general" means "involving, applicable to, or affecting the whole" and "not confined by specialization or careful limitation" (*Miriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th edition), it is curious that at a time when magazines are distilling audiences into Platonic essences, they are simultaneously diluting the definition of "general interest" so that it includes, conveniently, those self-same "very specific" audiences. Indeed, unless one is willing to sink into a quagmire of relativism—where one blithely accepts, for example, the editorial claim that *People* is "a news magazine with celebrities on the cover"—[225] the term "general interest," if no longer the very word "magazine," logically still implies 1) diverse content and 2) diverse readership. Seen in this light, the "twist" Husni refers to looks more like an opportunistic convolution.

"It's a crass industry that needs to make money—and lots of it," explains Missouri's Ranly. [226] "You pick up a magazine and you don't even know for sure what is an ad and what is not, and how many articles are run just because the advertiser says, 'I want an article on it,' or, for that matter, how often even the cover of the magazine is sold. We always think of this great [general-interest] magazine for blue-collar, lower-class people. Well, it's not going to happen. Would you ever get K-Mart and Saks Fifth Avenue to advertise in the same magazine? The point of the magazine industry is this: what we *really* do is create an audience for an advertiser to deliver their product. That's what we do. Let's face it. We're just chipping away at these little audiences and splinterizing a great deal more."

In an age when "general interest" ornaments the vocabulary of the magazine industry with little regard for context, when general-interest magazines exist in name only and have otherwise been determined "obsolete," [227] replaced by magazines "often created solely to carry ads to a target audience," [228] one wonders if George Washington, could he survey the field today—such as the arrival in 1990 of 62 titles featuring sex [229] and one featuring politics—[230] would repeat his words of 1788: "I consider such easy vehicles of knowledge more happily calculated than any other, to preserve the liberty, stimulate the industry and meliorate the morals of an enlightened and free people." [231]

Notes

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[3] Cohn, Jan. 1989. *Creating America: George Horace Lorimer and The Saturday Evening Post.* Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 196.

[4] Bennetts, Leslie. 1991. Magazine personalities: molders of the medium. In *The American Magazine*, ed. Amy Janello and Brendon Jones, 59-79. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 62.

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BIOGRAPHY SESSION: PEOPLE WHO
HAVE MADE A DIFFERENCE

The Retiring Feminist:
Doris E. Fleischman and Doris Fleischman Bernays

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"Independent" was the single-word headline on many of the stories about Doris E. Fleischman that ran in more than 250 newspapers in September 1922. Fleischman had kept her birth name when she married Edward L. Bernays, and after Manhattan's Waldorf Astoria refused to let her sign the hotel register with that name when the couple arrived for their honeymoon weekend, Bernays alerted newspapers.[1] During the next three decades, Fleischman continued to sign into hotels--and twice into maternity hospitals--as "Miss Doris E. Fleischman," and in 1925 she received the first U.S. passport given to a married woman under her birth name. That was her name on the 1928 book she edited on careers for women, and on the seven magazine articles and book chapters she published between 1930 and 1946.[2]

When she married at age 30, Fleischman both retained her birth name and became an equal partner with her husband in one of the country's first, most visible and most successful public relations consulting firms. Together, over the next 30 years, they helped form the field. A brilliant self-promoter, Bernays received virtually all of the credit for the firm's accomplishments. But when he was in his 90s, he admitted that Fleischman was equally responsible for them and did as much of the company's work as he did. She had a remarkable career as a pioneering public relations professional.[3]

Three decades after her marriage, though, Fleischman's life moved in a direction that would not have been headlined "Independent." In 1955, she relinquished her birth name, identifying herself as Doris Fleischman Bernays on the title page of her autobiographical book, A Wife Is Many Women. The book dealt not with her extraordinary career but with her experiences--and ineptitude--as a wife, mother and homemaker.[4] Six years later, she and her husband claimed they were retiring, sold their business and moved to Cambridge, Mass. With the move she gave up not only her career but close, long-lasting and stimulating friendships with other professional women who had offered her vital support.

When I first wrote about her in 1988, I thoroughly described all of her life except the 25 years before her death in 1980. I had been so disappointed with and mystified by what little I knew about these years that I virtually dismissed them. After she seemingly gave up her name and her career, I gave up on learning about her.[5]

Eventually I realized I needed to study these years and try to understand how and why Fleischman changed during them. When I did that, I learned much more. I discovered that not only did her life change less radically than I had thought, but I could much better understand the entirety of her life once I had examined these later years. The life-long personal and professional challenges she faced became much clearer, and her responses to them told me a great deal about who she was.

This paper examines the last third of Fleischman's life, both describing what she did--and what was done to her--during this time and showing how those actions were tied to earlier ones. It pays particular attention to Edward L. Bernays's overhwelming influence on Fleischman, and to the ways their personal and professional partnership restricted her, motivated her and provided her with opportunities. The richness of my findings also has led me to argue that all biographers, and especially those studying women, should pay careful attention to their subjects' later years.

"Retiring" the First Time

Doris Fleischman announced she was taking her husband's last name in an article titled "Notes of A Retiring Feminist" published in the February 1949 issue of The American Mercury.[6] As was often the case, though, public appearances contradicted the reality of her life. She remained Doris Fleischman for another six years; even the letters she sent to some two dozen people who wrote to her praising the piece and her decision to change her name were, with a very few exceptions, signed Doris E. Fleischman.[7]

An examination of that article lessens the surprise that she retained her birth name after writing it. It is primarily a string of amusing stories about the embarrassments and problems her name caused her, and it gives only vague, light explanations for why she originally kept that name and why she decided to give it up. Later her family could offer no specific justifications for her decision. Her daughters thought her maiden name had decreasingly been a problem in the 1940s, and they emphasized the pleasures and advantages it brought her. They also said many of the article's claims of friends' and family members' discomfort with her name were untrue. The best rationalization from her husband was that by 1949 keeping her own name had gotten to be too much trouble and had ceased to matter to her.[8]

In light of this, it is less contradictory than it seems that, a year after she published a magazine article announcing she was taking her husband's name, she was one of 24 people who revived the Lucy Stone League. Founded in 1921 by journalist Ruth Hale, the league began as an organization of New York professional women and a few of their husbands who championed a number of women's rights, especially their right to keep their birth names when they married.[9] Fleischman and Bernays had both joined in 1921, but the league had been dormant for the two decades before Ruth Hale organized former members to resuscitate it in 1950.[10]

Fleischman quickly became vice president of the revived league, putting considerable time into its activities until she resigned from membership--citing time constraints due to "commitments as far as my eye can reach"--in November 1952.[11] Additional factors may have influenced her resignation, for one league member wrote to her afterwards to say she would miss her for her "voice of caution, often expressing a skepticism which paralleled my own."[12]

Yet one particular "commitment" must have been much on her mind when she resigned. She had been working on a book manuscript for three years but had not yet found a publisher. Between March 1949 and June 1950, her agent had submitted an outline of an untitled autobiographical book along with drafts of four chapters to Houghton Mifflin, and Fleischman had made revisions based on editors' responses. This work was rejected in late August 1950, and during the next two years four other publishers either rejected it or discouraged further discussions about it. In August 1954 she finally signed a contract with Crown Publishing Co. And in May 1955 she informed Crown that the "author's name is to appear as Doris Fleischman Bernays." The book was published seven months later.[13]

No doubt a key reason she had problems finding a publisher was that she chose to write about a topic she was very poorly qualified to address: the problems married women face in caring for their husbands, children and homes. Her main theme was that wives are "amateurs" in their domestic work, something she most frequently established by telling stories of her own ignorance and mistakes. Although she drew on incidents from her adult life and childhood, she never described her life beyond disjointed anecdotes, recounted conversations and brief comments.

Despite being the country's foremost woman public relations consultant at that time, she seldom mentioned her demanding job. Indeed, she called being a housewife "my most important role" and described herself as "an 'average woman' whose housewifely problems are common to all average women."[14] These claims were made by someone who had always had servants--sometimes as many as 13--who had never cooked or even made a cup of coffee, who never did housework, and who disliked shopping so did it infrequently.[15] As her daughter Anne put it, "She dedicated herself to a life that was domestic only in the sense that she lived at home."[16]

Thus the examples of her own problems typically involved giving orders to the cook, ordering groceries on the telephone or entertaining 40 guests at a dinner party. Her friends also served as sources of anecdotes, and she often quoted living-room conversations with economists, psychologists, artists and other well-known people of the period.[17] Much in the book called attention to her high income level and busy social life. And perhaps logically, given her lack of "average" domestic experiences, she fabricated many incidents from her own life.[18]

The book's style contrasts markedly with the clarity and sharpness that characterized much of Fleischman's previous writing; she was an excellent editor who triple-spaced most of her work and continually revised it.[19] As much as anything, A Wife Is Many Women reads like stream-of-conscious musings. Most chapters lack clear direction and none has an introduction or conclusion. Paragraphs seldom begin with topic sentences or contain developed ideas; typically, they are composed of a string of brief, barely related thoughts, quotes or incidents. Although at least three people working in different capacities critiqued the manuscript before it was published and noted these kinds of problems,[20] she apparently was unable to see and/or correct them.

This informal, disorganized style is consistent with the way the author presented herself in her book. This Doris Fleischman Bernays was naive, ignorant, inept, confused, insecure and slow to learn--in many ways the opposite of the woman I know she was: highly intelligent and intuitive, sophisticated, analytical, witty, well-informed. But the book did feature one confident, knowledgeable, clear-thinking person: her husband, identified as "Eddie," whom the author called "perfect."[21] He appeared throughout the book, always knowing the right thing to do, answering her questions, understanding things that baffled her.

I admit that when I first read this book I could not believe the woman I had been studying had actually written it. A sentence in a one critique of the manuscript nicely summed up my reaction. After reading four chapter drafts and a book outline, Fleischman's friend, editor Wallace Brockway, remarked: "Here, I submit, is the consistent testimonial of a first-class mind trying hard to be less significant than it can be."[22]

Such a book cannot be ignored--although when I first wrote about Fleischman I tried to. The book's contents made me so uncomfortable and the reasons she wrote it seemed so unfathomable that I said little about it. Going back to examine it years later, I now see that it not only says some important things about its author but helps set the stage for the last 25 years of her life. I also am beginning to understand why she wrote it.

One important reason, I now believe, is that, unlike her husband, she had a passion beyond public relations. She had been writing for the love of it since high school,[23] and even when her personal and professional demands were pressing she steadily wrote both fiction and non-fiction. In the 1930s she was quite successful in finding markets for her non-fiction work; she published three articles, wrote two book chapters and co-authored two articles with her husband.

But in the 1940s she seems to have had trouble selling her work. In addition to "Notes of a Retiring Feminist," she published only two short articles; one was unpaid and the other ran half the length of her original manuscript. She was unable to sell at least two other pieces.[24] Nor had she found a publisher for any of the fiction she had produced over three decades. She had written one short story in 1926, at least three more in the 1930s, another five in the 1940s, and in the early 1950s did considerable work on two novels.[25] None of this work was ever published.

Thus she loved to write and likely had more time to write once her two daughters (born in 1928 and 1930) entered college, but she had accumulated a stack of publishers' rejections. Her biggest recent success, "Notes of a Retiring Feminist," dealt with her own life in a scattered, light-hearted manner. At the same time, her husband was pressuring her to write a book about her life. "She didn't originate it; I did," he asserted. "I told her to write it, I urged her to write it, because I felt she had a record that was worth preserving."[26] Many books on related subjects were selling well in the early 1950s, so this might have seemed to surest path toward publication.

She does seem to have originally planned to focus on her "record." Early correspondence, notes and drafts indicate that she began working on a true autobiography that would describe different stages in her own life far more systematically than she did in Wife. Additionally, she read and took extensive notes on research about women in fields such as sociology, psychology, economics, medicine, history and education, apparently intending to combine material from this research with her own life story.[27]

She was, then, both prepared to write and capable of writing a substantive and insightful book. Instead, she wrote in a haphazard manner about a topic--women's domesticity--with which she'd had very limited personal experience, but which was increasingly revered in middle-class America. She previously had been ahead of her times in many ways, but with this book she put herself solidly in the middle of them. And in the process she said much both about herself and about conflicts other professional women of the period no doubt faced. She also called attention to the role of gender in the life of one very successful public relations consultant, particularly when she is compared to the man who was her personal and professional partner.

"Women need to help each other"

A Wife Is Many Women nicely captures the veneration of motherhood and traditional sex roles that was widespread in post-World-War-II America and came to be called the feminine mystique. In both popular and more scholarly literature, family life was idealized, Freudian arguments that women were truly fulfilled only by motherhood and domesticity prevailed, and women with careers were attacked. As the birth rate skyrocketed so did the number of sources offering expert advice on child care, which uniformly recommended that mothers stay home with their young children and remain physically available to older ones. There also was discussion of the "women problem"--the discontent homemakers sometimes expressed with their roles--but women generally were advised to work harder to find fulfillment in taking care of their husbands, homes and children.[28]

As these ideals of motherhood and traditional domesticity remained powerful throughout the 1950s, with a few exceptions, the feminist rejoinder was moderate. A common response was a variation on 19th-century "domestic feminism" that advocated training as well as respecting homemakers so that their work was more satisfying. Some feminists encouraged women to accept the prevailing domestic ideology but develop other interests within its confines.[29] Although not very whole-heartedly, Fleischman made these same points in her book. She also argued with some of the most popular writers who criticized women's performance as wives and mothers, repeatedly maintaining that women did their best under difficult circumstances.

While preparing to write her book, Fleischman read a number of the key books that were influencing Americans' views on women's roles during this period.[30] Since she had little first-hand experience with traditional domestic life, it is not surprising that these sources helped form her thinking. Beyond that, some of them may well have affected her in the same way they affected other women readers: they may have made her feel more guilty, defensive or doubtful about aspects of the way she had lived her life.

This helps explain why in the book she constantly reaffirmed her subservience to her husband--which was true of the relationship--and maintained that it made her happier than is very likely. Similarly, she recounted numerous incidents and conversations with her daughters that never took place but gave the impression of an intimacy and involvement with them that did not exist. And she described her pleasure at carrying out homemaking tasks that she never undertook. In short, she presented herself as much happier and more satisfied than she was--and didn't write about the things in her life that really pained her.[31]

This book calls attention to a fundamental difference between male and female journalists--as well as other professionals--in this century. During the time Fleischman was working on her book, her husband was writing two: Public Relations, published in 1952, which became a classic source in the field, and Your Future in Public Relations, published in 1961, describing public relations careers. Four years later he published his autobiography; the 849-page book contained some scattered references and one 12-page chapter dealing with his family life. His wife devoted a comparable proportion of her much shorter book to her professional life.

Edward L. Bernays did not need to worry about the running of his home or the happiness of his children; his wife was in charge of that, also serving as equal partner in his business. He wrote books to communicate his ideas about public relations and further his reputation as one of the founders of the field, not to apologize for his personal life. He was untouched by the feminine mystique and paid little attention to other people's judgments of him. His wife prided herself on not arguing with him, on not complaining to him and on deferring to him in all important decisions involving their business and their marriage. She said he was perfect.

No wonder he was able to lead such a professionally productive and satisfying life.

But he did lack something his wife had, and that strengthened her in profound ways. She had many women friends who lived lives similar to hers. Throughout the 1940s she frequently spent time with other powerful women; daughter Doris Held describes them as a "phalanx of women who were feminists and successful professionals." They included lawyers, psychologists, business executives and journalists whom she saw often and from whom she gained sustenance.[32]

She seems to have had more time--or need--for organized involvement with like-minded women in the 1950s. When she helped revive the Lucy Stone League in early 1950, she was once again in close contact with fellow members such as suffrage leader Doris Stevens, journalist Jane Grant, lawyer Barbara Barb, writer Fannie Hurst and judge Anna M. Kross. As vice president she carried out in-depth research on U.S. women's economic status, also helping organize conferences and luncheons dealing with women's issues.[33]

The league's stated purpose was to combat "unjust discrimination against women in legal, economic, educational and social relationships."[34] But one of Fleischman's particular concerns was that young women were limiting their opportunities. "The younger generation of women just wants to be wives," she said in an interview. "They're afraid of life. . . . They're trying to escape their fears by marrying and looking for safety in the home."[35] The league seemed to be an outlet for her to express concerns that were too radical for her book.

Another important function of the league for Fleischman was the companionship it offered with other members. Daughter Anne Bernays, who was appointed "junior adviser" in an effort to draw much-needed younger women to the league, remembers meetings in the early 1950s. She says the women met as friends, had cocktails and dinner in each others' homes, and let down their hair. They shared much more than their concerns over "unjust discrimination against women." In Anne's words, "they sat around and schmoozed."[36]

Fleischman had even more satisfying relationships with the women in another organization, the Woman Pays Club. It had been formed in 1919 in imitation of New York's famous all-male Dutch Treat Club by professional women who wanted to spend time with and help each other. Members were required to be self-supporting and to have worked in one of "the seven arts" for at least two years. Many early members were newspaperwomen, authors or publicists, including Janet Flanner, Mary Margaret McBride, Louella Parsons and Anita Loos.[37]

Fleischman first joined the club in 1927, had dropped her membership by the 1940s and was invited to rejoin in 1956. She then became heavily involved in the organization, which at that time had more than 100 members, including many artists, musicians, and women working in theater, broadcasting and film. The members, most of whom were in their 40s, 50s or 60s, met biweekly at Sardi's for lunch (which they paid for themselves, rather than relying on a man). There they listened to speakers or performers, such as singers from the Metropolitan Opera. In a typical program, four women--an attorney, an obstetrician, a decorator and a theater producer--spoke on ways to fight prejudice against women in the professions. Well-known speakers included Eleanor Roosevelt, Isaac Stern, Talullah Bankhead and Cornelia Otis Skinner.[38]

As publicity chairman from mid-1958 through mid-1960, Fleischman seems to have served energetically and enthusiastically. She sent out news releases, compiled the monthly newsletter and worked on many club programs under president Caroline K. Simon, an attorney who became New York secretary of state in 1959 (and had been inducted on the basis of her writing and painting). In 1960 Fleischman was elected to a two-year term as president; the other officers were Simon, three authors, a drama coach, and a radio and television writers' agent.[39]

Although the president's position was demanding, she clearly found the connection to these women and frequent meetings with them very satisfying. "New York is essentially a lonely place," she explained. "Belonging to things always is a source of strength, and there are few opportunities for women to meet people on their levels of goals, accomplishments and interests."

She said there was "a psychological as well as a tangible handicap in having responsibility at home and in a career. Women need to help each other."[40]

But she had to give up these satisfying connections, as well as those with other women in her "phalanx," when she and her husband moved to Cambridge, Mass., allegedly to retire, in late 1961. In February 1962, saying it was "impossible for me to get to New York except on rare occasions," she resigned as Woman Pays Club president.[41] The decision to move to Cambridge had been almost solely her husband's. Since, as he explained, "she would be acceptable to anything I wanted," he saw little need to ask her feelings about it.[42]

"Retiring" the Second Time

I still don't fully understand either why the couple retired or why they moved to Cambridge in 1961. Although not as extraordinarily successful as it had been two decades earlier, their business was doing very well, as were they. They were both 70 when they left New York but seem to have had no new health problems associated with aging. And they went on to prove they were very capable of continuing their work as public relations consultants

Bernays gave a single reason for the retirement and move: He wanted to finish writing his autobiography, and his New York life distracted him from that task.[43] But he later admitted that he had already written so much by the time they moved that he didn't have to put a great deal of additional work into the book, so could do many other things with his time.[44] It also seems that it would have been more, not less, difficult to finish his autobiography once he'd left New York where he had carried out all of his career. Much would have to be moved.

Their reasons for settling in Cambridge are similarly illusive. Neither of them drove, but a car was required to easily get around in the city and most of its surrounding areas. Neither of them flew, which made trips to other major cities--and much of the country--difficult. Their two daughters had both moved to Cambridge and lived there with their husbands and children, but neither Fleischman nor Bernays was close to them.[45] Yet their daughters' satisfaction with the city may well have made their parents--or at least their father--think it would be very livable.

The illogic I find in the move probably would be unimportant if Fleischman hadn't given up so much with it and had so little choice in it. She had lived all her life in New York, knew it well and was known professionally there (although her husband was far more visible). Over four decades she had entertained large numbers of people in her home, usually having guests at least once a week. In a self-revealing comment, her husband explained the size of many of their gatherings: "Doris liked six people at one time; I liked forty-six. We compromised on thirty or forty."[46] A witty, highly intelligent woman who was very sensitive to other people, she had large numbers of acquaintances who liked her and thought highly of her.[47] And she had strong, interesting, sympathetic women friends, many of long-standing, whose lives were similar to hers and from whom she gained sustenance.

In this way Fleischman was very different from her husband. Bernays was a loner who could not cooperate with other public relations professionals and tended to alienate them.[48] He was so self-confident and such an expert self-promoter that he needed little validation from other men. In contrast, her high-level career made Fleischman unlike most women of her time, and her marriage further set her apart. She needed, and gained a great deal from, other women like herself, but because she didn't fly she could see these women very infrequently once she moved.

Fleischman's life changed in another important way in Cambridge. As a rule, owning material things such as nice clothes and furniture hadn't been important to the couple, but for much of their married life they had lived quite luxuriously in impressive homes. For example, when their first child was due and they needed larger quarters, they leased a huge house with three bedroom floors, including one with 11 rooms for servants.[49] In New York, a man came by weekly just to wind the clocks.[50] As Fleischman bluntly put it, "I was never trained to keep a house. When we lived in New York, we always had lots of help. I didn't know anything about running a house."[51]

But in Cambridge she had no live-in servants and had to learn how to run a large, high-maintenance, 150-year-old house surrounded by a half acre of lawn. The house, which they bought for $80,000 in August 1962, was oddly designed, impractical, collected dirt and was larger than Fleischman had wanted to buy. The primary pleasure she took in it was sitting in the yard.[52]

Over time, though, she adapted to this part of her very changed life. She and Bernays both learned to cook at a rudimentary level at least. Making sure the housework got done was primarily her responsibility and she eventually found local college students to work at the house for a semester or two, helping with tasks like cleaning, cooking, home maintenance, grocery buying and yard work. They were not experienced servants, but they were relatively inexpensive help, and most of the necessary work got done.[53] In the early 1970s Fleischman explained that she had learned "you can do it. So I do it very cheerfully, but painfully, and wastefully."[54]

She also developed another skill, but one her husband never permitted her to use. In the summer of 1965 she took 14 driving lessons in one month, passed the Massachusetts driving test and received her license. She was pleased and proud to have it, even bragging about it in newspaper interviews, and they bought a Cadillac. But Bernays soon told her he didn't want her to drive, and they initially hired a driver for the car.[55] In the 1970s they often utilized the same drivers at the Cambridge Cab Company both to transport them and to do small errands.[56]

In Cambridge she was limited, not by her own choice, in what she could do by herself. Her husband had wanted her close by in New York; there, daughter Doris says, "He practically wouldn't let her out of his sight." But she could easily see her women friends for lunch, at organizational functions or in her home.[57] And she had had decades to form strong friendships, plus numerous opportunities to meet women like herself. In Cambridge, though, she couldn't move about easily and her husband wanted her with him at home. In some ways, daughter Anne says, "she was a prisoner."[58]

She was similarly restricted in her Cambridge professional life. The couple never did retire; instead, they scaled back and modified their public relations practice. They kept their New York office going for about six months after they moved, then sold it and began a new business in Cambridge. Operating out of their home, each had an office that opened into a large room where one secretary worked. They hired other people, particularly graduate students, to perform any needed research, and referred the programs they developed to a local public relations firm, which carried out their plans.[59]

So their professional expenses were not high, and they had many clients, primarily from the Boston area but also from other parts of the country. For example, in 1968, West Valley Community College near San Francisco hired them to study how it could better attract students and serve the surrounding community.[60] From 1970-1974 they did extensive work for the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Cultural and Educational Affairs, helping develop a range of programs aimed at improving relations between the United States and other countries. Other clients during these two decades included the U.S. Departments of Commerce and of Health, Education and Welfare, and the Massachusetts Law Association.[61]

They seem to have been paid quite well, charging by time spent rather than by the project, as they had in New York.[62] In 1970 they quoted their fee for "consultation or/and speaking for nonprofit organizations" as $400 per day, "plus out of pocket traveling expenses and special study time if that is needed for preparation of material." The fee for profit-making organizations, they said, was much higher.[63] In 1969 their rate for what was apparently another non-profit client was $50/hour.[64]

In addition, they did considerable local pro bono public relations work. Thus in late 1973 Bernays and Fleischman agreed to co-chair National Library Week activities in Massachusetts and supplied the state's National Library Association with a 20-page plan for activities.[65] Around this same time they offered unpaid public relations help to numerous liberal organizations, including the re-election campaigns of several U.S. senators and members of Congress opposed to the Vietnam War, and the Boston Publishers Action Committee to Stop the War in Indochina.[66]

Unpaid work seems to have been the one kind Fleischman could do on her own, without sharing credit with her husband. For example, in the early 1970s she agreed to analyze a Boston music school's problems and draw up a specific development and fundraising program for it.[67] (Music was one of her loves, and she had sung opera as a girl.) This was one of the infrequent times she didn't work in tandem with her husband; she was the "contact person" and her name appeared on all the written material associated with this work.

But in Cambridge she didn't have contact with paid clients, just as she had had no client contact in New York.[68] Similarly, the stationery used in the Cambridge business simply read

"Edward L. Bernays," accompanied by an address and phone number. It made no mention of Fleischman despite the fact that, as had been the case in New York, the two worked together on virtually all campaigns and were equally responsible for their business success.[69] So, once again, he was the visible partner and received most of the recognition for their work.

Bernays had justified Fleischman's invisibility in New York primarily on economic grounds, since he said they would have lost business if clients had had to deal with a woman, while they would have failed to obtain some of the business they had if Fleischman's presence were well known. In other words, the prejudices of the times made it inadvisable for him to share the limelight with his female partner. Also, he said, Fleischman was a modest person who didn't want or need public recognition of her work.[70]

But these arguments are less persuasive in the Boston area during the 1960s and 1970s. Bernays's strenuous efforts to establish himself as "the father of public relations" and "U.S. publicist no. 1" had been successful enough that he shouldn't have been worried that new business would suffer if his partnership with his wife were widely acknowledged. As American feminism was reborn during these two decades, clients were far less likely to refuse to work with a woman, and more likely to value her expertise. Indeed, she might well have been a better client-contact person than her husband, for she was an excellent and quick judge of people, was verbally adept and listened very well. Daughter Anne thinks "she would have been terrific with clients."[71]

Contact Not with Clients, But with Other Women

In still another way, then, her husband limited her Cambridge life. But one of his strong interests unexpectedly benefited her when, very soon after moving to Cambridge, he began speaking on public relations and public relations education to college and university classes and at other academic events.[72] It was a smart move. He craved attention and appreciation of his accomplishments but had fewer opportunities for this once he was "retired" and living in a city far from the one where he had been highly recognized. Yet the Boston area's concentration of higher education institutions offered many possibilities for visibility, and his long career gave him much to talk about.

In addition to giving him visibility, speaking to academic audiences helped give him long-term credibility, something he must have especially desired as his life was winding down. With academic recognition he could solidify his reputation as one of the founders of public relations. In effect, he could make sure he was part of the curriculum when public relations was discussed.[73] He did not let up in his other efforts at self promotion--indeed, he sent so many news releases about himself to the Boston Globe that at one time an editor ordered that none of them be opened.[74] But by speaking in an academic setting he could better insure a prominent spot in public relations history.

He began these efforts in the early 1960s at Boston University's School of Public Communication, where he frequently spoke and from which he received an honorary doctorate in 1966.[75] He usually wanted Fleischman along on his frequent visits to the university, and this led to her meeting Helen Wiebe, the wife of Gerhart Wiebe, dean of the school. The two women shared a high level of mental energy and were close friends for about a decade, until the Wiebes retired to Costa Rica in the early 1970s.[76]

Similarly, in fall 1966 Bernays was asked to speak at an evening public relations class at Babson College in nearby Wellesley. Fleischman accompanied him to a pre-class dinner with the course instructor, the director of the evening program and his wife, who soon became another good friend. Eleanor Genovese, wife of economics professor Frank Genovese, was at first concerned that she would have little in common with a public relations professional from New York who was a generation older than she was. But Fleischman quickly warmed to her, was very interested in her life and saw her regularly, often encouraging her to develop her abilities and feel confident about herself.[77] Genovese had not had a career, but Fleischman valued her intelligence and her success as the mother of five children, also seeming to identify with her as someone who had to live in her husband's shadow.[78]

These women were among the few Fleischman was close to when she lived in Cambridge. They were important to her because she had given up a "phalanx" of strong women friends when she left New York, and also because she encountered the legendary New England reticence and insularity that tended to make people unfriendly toward newcomers.[79] As one Cambridge friend put it, "They chose to locate in an academic community that was very closed."[80]

She, in turn, was not always diplomatic in her interactions with local women. Although in the 1960s she joined a small number of traditional women's organizations, such as the old-order Women's City Club of Boston, the relationships were short-lived. She often had very good ideas for improving these organizations but wasn't able to tactfully present them. Instead she appeared bossy and superior, and she quit when most of her ideas weren't appreciated. She also had contempt for the volunteerism that motivated most of the women in these organizations and disliked the fact that these intelligent women did not have careers. Indeed, she met few Cambridge women of her generation who had had careers.[81]

In a sense, she had been spoiled by her New York relationships with women who were very similar to her and with whom she could be herself. In New York she was able to work hard for organizations she believed in and where her ideas were valued. She also could take part, without her husband, in activities she enjoyed. But she had minimal patience for the Cambridge women she met through women's organizations, and these long-established groups were set in their ways. She could not make much difference to them and gained little from them.

But in 1970 she made what proved to be a particularly worthwhile effort to meet women very unlike those who had disappointed her. The previous year a small group of women had formed a club based on a common need: they were searching for journalism jobs after leaving the workplace to raise families. Most were from the Midwest or West Coast and as college students had been members of Theta Sigma Phi, a society for women journalism majors. Besides student chapters, Theta Sigma Phi had professional chapters that were vital to women because they were excluded from joining the major organization for journalists, Sigma Delta Chi. In 1970 the Massachusetts club was chartered as a Theta Sigma Phi alumni chapter--the first one in the Boston area--and soon afterwards voted to broaden its membership by admitting non-alumni.[82]

Fleischman arrived at her first meeting in fall 1970 without her husband--no doubt one of the few times in the past nine years she had gone to a professionally related function on her own. Outwardly, the members she met were very different from her. Most were considerably younger than she was, still had heavy family responsibilities, had far less--and less impressive--professional experience, and were struggling to move back into the workplace.[83] They were trying to enter the kind of professional world she had left behind in New York.

Yet she connected quite strongly with these women, in part because she shared so many professional interests with them. And since this was a new organization, members may not have found her ideas--or the ways she presented them--as threatening as had members of long-established, traditional women's organizations. Certainly she was no more a Boston-area newcomer than were most other Theta Sigma Phi members, who were searching for the kind of advice and guidance she was superbly qualified to give them.

Fleischman joined the chapter in April 1971[84] and became an enthusiastic participant in its monthly meetings, where members knew her not as the wife of Edward L. Bernays and certainly not as someone who needed to brag about her past. Indeed, Caroline Iverson Ackerman, one of the chapter's founding members and later president at a time when Fleischman was particularly strongly involved, never remembers Fleischman talking about her New York professional life.[85] The contrast here between Fleischman and her husband is remarkable.

Rather than talking about herself, Fleischman concentrated on helping and encouraging other members. She gave them specific and general career advice, helped them determine their strengths and find ways to emphasize them, and listened with sympathy and understanding to their concerns. She also advised student members (who joined this chapter since there were no student chapters in the Boston area) and helped them get jobs. It was obvious that she enjoyed being around these young people.[86] Other young women also searched her out for career help. As she described it, "There is almost not a day passing that some young woman doesn't come in and say can I give her some advice. And I love to do it."[87]

But it was a young woman helping Fleischman that led to one of her most rewarding relationships during the last decade of her life. Since she couldn't drive to meetings herself she needed a ride, and in fall 1970 Camille Roman volunteered to drive her. Roman had just graduated from the University of Michigan, was working on a small newspaper in nearby Quincy, and, as a Theta Sigma Phi alumna, had joined the new chapter to meet other women journalists. She ended

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up driving Fleischman to many meetings and, despite a 60-year age difference (and almost as vast a class one), a close friendship soon developed.[88]

Roman spent much time at Fleischman's home and was occasionally hired by Fleischman and Bernays to help them with projects. Fleischman took the young woman under her wing and became quite involved in both her professional and personal life. She advised her, built her confidence and developed a deep understanding of her. She also told Roman about her own career and, especially, about her non-public relations writing. In discussing Roman's career with her, Fleischman was able to see (unlike her husband) that public relations was not her best choice, even though Roman had the necessary skills. She told Roman she thought she would be happiest if she wrote and taught. After earning a PhD in English, Roman went on to successfully do both.[89]

The differences between these kinds of friendships and those she had had with women in New York are revealing. In Cambridge Fleischman was restrained from moving about easily on her own by a husband who wanted her nearby constantly. She was offended by many of the women of her generation whom she met when she joined a few traditional organizations, but was isolated by distance from her strong, supportive and similar New York friends. No wonder she seemed to prefer the company of men, with whom she could talk more easily than she could with most women she met.[90]

Yet over time she was able to develop rewarding relationships with area women. At first this happened essentially by accident, when she accompanied her husband as he went to speak at colleges and universities and met professors' wives whom she very much liked. But she most often saw these women in their husbands'--and her husband's--company. She met quite different women when she went without Bernays to the meetings of a professional group that men were not allowed to join. (True to form, however, in 1972 he became one of the five men who were the first inducted into Theta Sigma Phi when it became Women in Communications, Inc., and voted to admit men.)[91]

Because her life had been very different from those of these Boston-area women, her relationships with them differed markedly from those she had had with most of her close New York friends. These women could not offer her the same degree of support, understanding and stimulation she had found earlier in New York, but she did could give them a great deal of support, understanding and stimulation. In addition to being able to draw on decades of high-level professional experience, she had the ability to grasp who these women were and what they needed to do and hear.

She always had been an excellent listener who gave good advice because she often understood people quickly.[92] After she moved to Cambridge, her best relationships with women seem to have been based on this empathy, rather than on life commonalties. Very selective in what she revealed about herself (and, unlike her husband, having little need for the admiration of others), she apparently knew these women far better than they knew her.[93] "She had a wonderful knack of just concentrating on you when she talked with you," one friend explained. "She made you feel you were important, and could do anything."[94]

Fleischman must have received much in return, including some things that probably were not available to her in New York from the 1920s through the 1950s. During those years she was an unusual woman with a successful, high-level career who led a hectic and quite public life. Close friendships with similar women helped sustain her as she made her way in a largely inhospitable culture. But in the 1960s and 1970s, when she had little opportunity to meet similar women, she also had less need for this kind of sustenance. Her New York life bore scant resemblance to the lives of her Boston women friends, and she chose to tell most of them very little about her past. She did not set out to impress them. Rather, she found she could help them make their own ways through professional and personal mazes that were very different in their details but similar in their fundamentals to her own earlier ones.

It had to be rewarding for her to find she could help younger women, many of whom were trying to make changes in their lives. They had few mentors or role models for these changes, but Fleischman had both experience and empathy that made her invaluable. As she entered her 70s and then her 80s, living physically separated from many of the important people and places from her past, and with more free time than she had previously had, she may well have been looking back on her life. It makes sense that she would want to pass on lessons from her experiences to younger women and help them anticipate or avoid the problems that had been new to her.

These friendships with women one and two generations younger than she was seem to have served another function as well. She had not had close, confiding relationships with her two daughters either when they lived with her in New York or when they lived nearby in Cambridge, where she expressed little curiosity about their lives. Despite the fact that her daughters entered fields that were two of her loves--one became a psychologist and the other a novelist--they cannot remember her discussing possible careers with them when they were girls or showing much interest in their work when they were adults.[95]

She seems to have regretted this lack of closeness at least by the time they were in their 20s, for in her book, published in 1955, she consistently described mother-daughter relationships that were almost the direct opposite of the reality. For example, she wrote that Anne sought her advice on how to make a fluffy omelet, which she explained to the pleased teenager, and she described giving both daughters a detailed demonstration of how to wash dishes. Similarly, she recounted long discussions about love and sex between herself, her daughters and sometimes their friends.[96] One displeased reviewer reacted to this material by commenting, "I dare say that few if any right thinking American mothers in any generation would have handled and discussed sex with a daughter in a manner she claims to have done."[97]

The reviewer need not have feared, for such discussions--whether about sex or cooking--never took place. Fleischman and her daughters did not confide in each other, nor would the girls have thought to ask her about such things as cooking or housework, since she neither did nor knew how to do either. As daughter Doris put it, "She imparted to me no domestic knowledge. I had to start absolutely from scratch when I married."[98]

Fleischman created--both in the book itself and in unpublished notes for it--a level of closeness, intimacy and friendship with her daughters that did not begin to exist, leading me to think she would have liked to have been a different kind of mother. Yet she did not become one when she moved to Cambridge. She did, though, become an excellent friend and guide to women her daughters' ages and younger. Her professional expertise was the basis for many of these friendships, and it let her connect to these women in ways she had not with her daughters. She seems to have understood these adult women better than she had understood her daughters when they were girls and teenagers during the 1930s and 40s. And certainly these women were grateful, receptive beneficiaries of her advice and empathy.

Recognition and Other Rewards

Some of these friendships also played a role in Fleischman being honored for her past professional accomplishments--an irony given her reluctance to discuss those accomplishments with the women she met in Cambridge. She was first honored a year after she joined the Boston chapter of Theta Sigma Phi. Some savvy members who were searching for a way to provide the fledgling chapter with visibility within the national organization nominated Fleischman for one of the organization's Headliner Awards, given each year to outstanding women in communications.[99] The national organization then selected her as a recipient of one of its 1972 awards along with four other women, including UPI White House correspondent Helen Thomas and novelist Eudora Welty. In addition to giving two speeches at the organization's national convention in Houston, she received considerable newspaper attention.[100]

In 1977 she received a local honor that sprang from similar motivations. Babson College had recently begun both accepting women students and awarding honorary degrees, and it was hoping for high media visibility when it awarded its honorary doctor of law degrees that spring. Babson Economics Professor Frank Genovese and his wife Eleanor knew Fleischman and Bernays well by this time; he nominated them both and they were selected as recipients. He said there was little question in his mind that they were equally deserving, and he knew this husband-wife team would help call attention to the college's co-ed enrollment. The honorary degree meant more to Bernays than it did to Fleischman, but he made sure they both received media coverage for it, and it recognized her public relations career in a way that must have been rewarding.[101]

Her connections with the two organizations that honored her also were the basis for two competitions intended to help women like those she had come to know in Cambridge. Both contests were financed by the Edward L. Bernays Foundation, which had been established in 1946 to fund scholarships and awards, and to give grants for projects that would, in Bernays's words, "conduct research into all phases of and conditions affecting human, cultural and group relations, and the changes and improvement in the conditions of life and work among people."[102] The small grants usually were intended as seed money, and often advanced liberal social causes with considerable public visibility in areas such as civil rights.[103]

The first competition, announced in spring 1974, was co-sponsored by the Edward L. Bernays Foundation and Women in Communications, Inc. (formerly Theta Sigma Phi). It offered a $1,000 award for "the best plan to aid women in communications in achieving parity with men in opportunity for advancement, remuneration and other recognition for equal merit."[104] The competition was a large undertaking involving many mailings, a great deal of administrative and clerical work, and considerable expense. More than 100 entries of up to 5,000 words were submitted and the finalists were read by nine judges, who included Ms. magazine publisher Patricia Carbine, journalist Helen Thomas, Philadelphia Inquirer Assistant Managing Editor Dorothy Jurney and writer Elizabeth Janeway.[105] The 45-year-old winner, who received her award at a well-publicized Boston event in fall 1975, was someone very similar to the women Fleischman had been advising and supporting at the Boston chapter of the organization that became Women in Communications. A former reporter and editor at the Lynn Daily Item in Massachusetts, she had left the newspaper to re-examine her life and was in the process of establishing her own public relations agency specializing in hospitals.[106]

The second competition addressed a broader concern of Fleischman's: the economic and legal difficulties faced by America's unpaid and often under-appreciated homemakers. To address this problem, in the winter of 1977-1978 the Edward L. Bernays Foundation co-sponsored another contest, this time with Babson College. It awarded a $3,000 prize for the best 5,000-word essay outlining a "practical program to achieve economic justice for American homemakers." Frank Genovese was the competition's administrator; its seven judges included the presidents of Radcliffe and Wellesley colleges and a U.S. senator and congresswoman.[107]

Like the Women in Communications competition, this one was labor-intensive and carefully orchestrated. During December 1977, for example, some 10,000 copies of news releases were mailed to every U.S. daily and college newspaper, every television station and more than half of the country's radio stations. Apparently these nationwide publicity efforts were successful, for more than 1,000 essays were submitted from throughout the country.[108]

Fleischman must have been gratified that she could help create competitions that addressed two of her concerns. She had known other women in the media throughout her career and had included material on women journalists' professional problems in 1928 and 1930 publications.[109] But in the early 1970s she undoubtedly gained a clearer view of the struggles faced by women journalists when she became friends with members of Women in Communications. Similarly, she had little experience as a homemaker but had a long-standing interest in housework. She had researched the topic extensively in preparation for her 1955 book, and two decades later, when she had no full-time servants, she must have been even more aware of how demanding and unappreciated housework was. So her Cambridge life helped her better understand the problems of both women journalists and homemakers, also giving her personal contacts and time that let her try to do something about those problems.

But despite Fleischman's strong motivations and feelings related to these two issues, her involvement in the competitions formed to address them was typical of virtually all of the work she carried out with her husband. He was in the spotlight--giving the speeches and interviews and running meetings--while she stayed in the background. Thus in carrying out the contest to help women journalists, Bernays had complete control; he gave the orders, usually telling others both what to do and how to do it, and allocated money each time it was needed. Fleischman worked as hard as her husband, but Bernays was in charge and in the foreground--so much so that he presented the award.[110] The pattern was similar in the "economic justice for homemakers" competition. Bernays directed the competition, gave the orders, dominated the interviews and helped present the award without Fleischman.[111]

While living in Cambridge, though, Fleischman did do something that was public, that she enjoyed, for which she received full (and sole) credit, and which her husband could not dominate. She wrote almost two dozen book reviews for the nearby Worcester Sunday Telegram, reflecting one of her loves as well as one important way she differed from her husband.

For decades Fleischman had read voraciously for pleasure. She enjoyed most kinds of writing, particularly fiction (she loved mysteries) and poetry. This made her very unlike Bernays who, in daughter Anne's words, "never read anything but books that threw light on the management of group dynamics."[112] Fleischman constantly read both serious and escapist books and was very familiar with the most talked-about and controversial books.[113] In Cambridge she thus had both the time and knowledge needed to write book reviews, and in doing so could show her expertise in one of the few areas her husband could not co-opt.

She had much less success finding an outlet for the fiction she wrote in Cambridge. In the mid-1960s she started a new novel; she said it had "a woman protagonist" who was "a cross between Virginia Woolfe, Marcel Proust and Steve Allen."[114] A decade later she was still working on that and also had gone back to writing a science fiction novel she had started in the mid-1950s.[115] But, like the other fiction she had steadily written since the 1920s, these works were never published.

This may have been a factor in her 1977 decision to go along with her husband's idea that they self-publish 22 of her poems in a small book titled Progression.[116] She had written poetry for decades (her first poem was published in 1916), spending more time on it in the 1960s and 70s. Typical of their relationship, Bernays not only decided that her poetry should be published but made the arrangements for it. He then sent news releases about it to newspapers and mailed many copies of the book to the couple's acquaintances.[117] Fleischman, in contrast, said the book was published "despite my protest--a kind of invasion of privacy." But she admitted she was "delighted at the response."[118]

Bernays may have particularly wanted his wife's poetry published, and Fleischman been willing to go along with the idea, because her health markedly deteriorated during the last half of the 1970s. Her arthritis worsened to the extent that many movements were difficult, a problem that was intensified by the fact that a serious back injury as a young woman left her in pain for the rest of her life. She suffered increasingly more debilitating angina, cataracts made it difficult for her to read except with a magnifying glass, she had a pronounced hearing loss, and during the last year and a half of her life she kept a tank of oxygen nearby.[119] As she put it the title poem in Progression, "When I was eighty/ Life was superfluous,/ Wonderful, terminal."[120]

But her poetry was one of the few places she hinted at her health problems. She seems to have barely mentioned them to people outside her family. Thus she never said anything at all about them to one of her closest Cambridge friends, while another knew so little of them that she was shocked to arrive at Fleischman's house and find her lying incapacitated on a couch--with no desire to discuss why she was there.[121] Daughter Doris remembers that when she was a child physical complaints were one of the few taboo dinner-table conversation topics; Fleischman used to say, "no clinic at the table."[122] Beyond this, throughout her adult life Fleischman lived by the credo that women should never complain about their problems, and she adhered to that credo to the end.

Bernays was exceedingly aware of her health problems, of course, and was very concerned with helping her do as well as possible. He looked after her lovingly and generally uncomplainingly.[123] In an entry in a journal she intermittently kept near the end of her life, Fleischman described a "bad week" and then wrote, "I get along as long as Eddie continues kind, thoughtful and patient--and trying to spare me from effort and pain."[124] But 1980 was a very difficult year, and she died on July 11 following a stroke. She was 88.[125]

Lessons Learned from Later Years

When I first wrote about Doris Fleischman, I briefly touched on the period of her life covered in this paper, both because I didn't consider her last years important and because I didn't like (or wasn't able to deal with) the person she seemed to become during those years. I was uncomfortable studying someone who progressively became less "independent," as the headlines had labeled her when she married. I also doubted I could learn much of significance about Fleischman by researching her less professionally productive years in Cambridge. I was like many biographers who deal quickly with their subjects in retirement and old age, assuming that the end of a person's life deserves limited examination.

But I found that by studying these final 30 years I did much more than fill in a missing period of time. This examination helped me see things about Fleischman that I had missed or misunderstood previously, and it threw into relief key patterns and contradictions that characterized all of her adult life. It also showed me that I had been wrong in some of the assumptions I had made about her actions during these three decades.

These assumptions began to break down when I finally paid careful attention to Fleischman's surrender of her birth name. Her own published explanations of this decision were unconvincing or untrue, while she proceeded to keep her name for six years following her announcement that she was giving it up. According to her daughters, she had taken pleasure in and easily managed the inconveniences of the name for 30 years. Neither Fleischman in her 1949 article nor her husband in interviews with me ever identified new problems that had arisen in the 1940s, and surely she had minimal trouble dealing with familiar ones by that time.

"That time," I eventually realized, offered the best explanation of this move. But I only began to see the ways she was affected by societal developments in the 1940s and 50s when I analyzed something that made me even more uncomfortable than Fleischman giving up her name: her 1955 book. Like her name change, that book seemed to contradict the values and abilities that had been so strongly demonstrated in her actions before World War II. But when I looked at her name and her book together, and within their post-World-War-II context, I realized they made more sense than was first evident.

Fleischman changed her name and wrote her book at a time when women's approved roles had narrowed. To excel at domestic tasks was to excel as a middle-class woman. Her name had given her satisfaction, but it also advertised that she had a life apart from her home, and that this other life was important to her. As she read the literature about women and domesticity that was selling so well, she may have given new thought to the ways much of her life differed from those of the women addressed in these books. The feminist response to this writing was tepid and the Lucy Stone League was moribund. Fleischman had already made her point when it mattered most to her. So in the late 1940s why not stop calling attention to her "independence"--and in the process write a lighthearted article about how unimportant keeping her name had been?

This interpretation is reinforced by much that Fleischman wrote in A Wife Is Many Women. The fundamental point of this disorganized book is that married women are required to do too many jobs (28, she said), many requiring a high level of expertise. She established this in part by emphasizing her own ignorance and ineptitude in carrying out common domestic tasks. Homemakers, she argued, deserved more appreciation than they commonly received.

In both her choice of book topic and her constant efforts to present herself as "average" she seemed to be trying to place herself within the American mainstream. The times were pushing her in this direction, but I suspect her personal history offers another explanation. She turned 60 in 1951. Her daughters were grown and she had been an exceedingly successful public relations consultant for three decades. She certainly had made a name for herself. But at that stage in her life keeping her birth name may have seemed less important, and less worth the inconveniences, than it had been previously, particularly if it branded her as being more unconventional than she wanted to appear.

This also would be a logical point in life to feel regret over earlier actions and decisions, and that regret may have been fueled by all she had been reading about conventional women's roles. It is hard not to see evidence of regret in the portions of the book that present her as a very different mother and homemaker than she was, and in her depiction of her "perfect" husband. As daughter Anne put it, the book is "suffused with a rosy glow," and "is so far off it can't be seen as realistic."[126] But I think the book does reflect ideals she had for her life, and a wish that she could have lived parts of it differently. Taking her husband's name may have seemed a way to live closer to those ideals, just as her book let her present those ideals as real.

I could not have developed this interpretation of events that previously had seemed inexplicable if I had not examined Fleischman's years in Cambridge. During that time she took pleasure in offering emotional support and practical advice to younger women. She was good at this and her help was much appreciated. Once I understood this part of her later life, I could better see the meaning in the fictionalized descriptions of her relationships with her daughters in her book. She did want to be a helpful, understanding mother. But she was best able to offer this kind of mothering to young women who had not known her previously and never knew her well.

Similarly, a look at these Cambridge years convinced me that the concerns Fleischman strongly expressed in her book about homemakers' responsibilities were genuine. Her lack of first-hand experience as a homemaker caused severe problems, which she dealt with poorly, but she did truly care about her topic, at least in part because it had received so much post-World-War-II media attention, and she had read widely in this literature.

If the topic had not mattered deeply to her, I reasoned, she would not have continued talking about it long after she had finished her book. But she brought up this subject frequently in both the 1960s and 70s,[127] and then helped develop the 1978 "economic equity for homemakers" competition. Her concerns probably intensified when in Cambridge she was faced with something that probably had been unimaginable to her when she wrote A Wife Is Many Women---the need to do some of her own cooking and housework--but her interest seems to have been long-standing.

Never Independent in Marriage

Thus an examination of the last two decades of Fleischman's life helped me understand some of her key actions in the 1940s and 50s, and cut through the dishonesty with which she wrote about herself as well as her reluctance to be self-revealing with others. Yet knowledge of these later years was even more helpful in illuminating something that began in 1922 and formed her for the rest of her life: her personal and business partnership with Edward L. Bernays. I had never faced a shortage of information about this "24-hour-a-day partnership," as both Fleischman and Bernays called it, for Bernays and their daughters spoke with me about it at length, while Fleischman wrote about it and discussed it in interviews. But the relationship had had such profound emotional effects on all of these people that I had to be especially careful in my use of what they told me. Describing this relatationship required that I have reliable additional information, which I found in the couple's actions during the 1960s and 70s.

After the two moved to Cambridge their work and marriage were even more intertwined than they had been before, since their offices were in their home. Also, as newcomers to the city, they had fewer outside activities to take them away from each other. Similarly, their limited household help, restricted list of clients and much less frequent at-home entertaining meant fewer people were in their lives to buffer their interactions than had been the case in New York. So in many ways their relationship can be seen more clearly than when it is examined as a part of their busier pre-Cambridge lives.

Certainly the most obvious element of that relationship is Bernays's extreme dominance of his wife. The couple moved to Cambridge because he wanted to, they bought a big house because that was his preference, she accompanied him to colleges and universities because he wanted her along as he tried to boost his reputation in academia, and he kept her from driving despite her excitement about getting her license. She had stronger intuitive and interpersonal skills than her husband, but he had all their paid-client professional contacts, even though by the 1960s clients likely were much less reluctant to work with a woman than they had been in previous decades. And as had been the case in New York, until her health declined, Fleischman worked as hard as Bernays did in the business and contributed as much as he did to its success.[128]

It is revealing to examine the ways Bernays even dominated the activities Fleischman cared most about. She originally went to Theta Sigma Phi meetings on her own, and spent much time talking one-on-one with individual members who needed job advice. But in 1972 he became one of the first male members of the organization that had just been renamed Women in Communications, Inc., and started attending Boston chapter meetings with his wife. When the chapter put on job workshops for students, he, rather than Fleischman, spoke. And Bernays was in complete control of the 1975 competition sponsored by the organization and his foundation.[129]

The pattern was similar, although with one marked reverse, in their work with people at Babson College. Fleischman met a woman who became one of her best Boston-area friends because Bernays wanted her with him when he first spoke at the college. Then Frank Genovese's friendship with Fleischman and Bernays as a couple, and his knowledge of the work they had done together, led him to nominate both of them for honorary doctorates. So Fleischman benefited in two very different ways from doing what her husband wanted. This connection also led to the "economic parity for homemakers" contest, which let her try to make a difference in an area that had long concerned her. Here, too, though, her husband controlled the important elements of the competition, was its key spokesperson and presented the award.

Equally telling is the way Bernays intervened in what may have been Fleischman's strongest love once they moved to Cambridge: her creative writing. Her poetry was less private than her fiction writing, for she wrote it in a little notebook she carried around, and Bernays sometimes drew small illustrations for her poems. He often showed that he cared about them.[130] Non-family members seem to have been more aware of this kind of writing than they were of her fiction, and she indicated her desire to have her poetry published when in 1965 she submitted one poem, "Drought," to the Boston Globe, where it was printed.[131]

So she loved writing poetry and thought at least some of it warranted a wider audience. But Bernays made sure her book was published and then publicized, and he was the one who sent copies to their acquaintances. He ran this project, just like he did most of the others that involved the two of them. Fleischman would never have put her work forward in this way. But Bernays had a hard time not drawing attention to himself, and believed public recognition helped certify the value of people's actions. He admired his wife's poetry, saw her working on it as her health deteriorated, knew it was important to her, and responded in a way he no doubt thought was extremely logical: he had the small collection printed, then got it into others' hands. And for once Fleischman didn't have to share (or turn over) the spotlight. His name is nowhere on the booklet.

These developments at the end of Fleischman's life helped me understand something that was fundamental to their "24-hour-a-day partnership." An excessive self-promoter, Bernays thrived on attention and had a difficult time sharing credit for the work he and Fleischman did. In their public relations practice she was almost invisible, despite Bernays's repeated assertion in interviews with me that her work was as important as his and that their professional partnership was truly equal. Not only did her work go unrecognized in New York, but she seldom talked about it with her new friends in Cambridge, where she still had no paid-client contact.

Bernays was too driven by the need for visibility and accolades to give up professional recognition to Fleischman, but he seems to have been her biggest fan--and promoter--when she was doing work apart from him. His efforts in the publication of her poetry provide one example, and they led me to go back through her history to look for similar instances. I found two that are well documented.

A chronology of the writing, publication and promotion of A Wife Is Many Women details how heavily involved Bernays was in this book. For example, he constantly corresponded with Fleischman's agent and publisher about many of the specifics of publication, worked with artists on the book's cover, wrote the copy for the jacket, sent page proofs to magazine editors, and orchestrated an elaborate promotional campaign.[132] Before the manuscript found a publisher, he sent copies of early chapters to several editors he knew for their critiques.[133] Clearly, his role went beyond pushing and encouraging Fleischman to write the book, as he later admitted in interviews. He was heavily involved in the book overall, and this probably further added to Fleischman's need to layer a "rosy glow" over the life she portrayed in it.

Bernays was similarly involved in another of Fleischman's writing efforts. In 1945 she wrote a 50,000-word fiction manuscript about nuclear war titled "The Last Strike." She seems to have cared deeply about the subject and the manuscript, which she condensed to about one-tenth its original length as a result of reaction from different readers. Bernays continually sent copies of the first and shortened version to editors, and in June 1947 had the manuscript set in type; 3,000 copies were printed and sent to still more editors.[134] At the end of October Fleischman indicated to one editor who had read the galleys that the project was well out of her control. "Eddie isn't telling me at this point what he is going to do with the piece," she said. "I have been trying for a year and a half to convince him not to do anything at all."[135]

These three examples from the 1940s, 1950s and 1970s say much about how Fleischman and Bernays lived and worked together. Fleischman put great effort into her non-public-relations writing but struggled to find book or magazine publishers for it. So Bernays took control of many parts of the process and could not be stopped. At times, only the words on the page were still hers. But he gave her work a chance it wouldn't have had otherwise, and encouraged her to do a kind of writing that was very important to her. They gained in two very different ways.

When I first studied Fleischman, I ignored her fiction and poetry writing. I couldn't see its importance until I saw how important it was to her after she moved to Cambridge. This is one example of the way studying the end of her life let me see behaviors that led me to review my data from earlier periods and recognize strong patterns I had missed. When I went back and observed the large quantity of this writing and its consistent production over six decades of her life, I knew it needed to be seriously considered despite the fact only the poetry was published.

There are lessons here for others studying women in journalism history. Much can be learned, I'm convinced, from carefully examining women journalists in retirement and old age. Fundamental personality traits may be clearer at this time because they are not as strongly masked by paid work. Additionally, because people's lives usually are less public then, they may pay less attention to how they are perceived. They may feel freer to be themselves.

Thus when I studied Fleischman in the 1960s and 70s I could distinctly see her quick, intuitive understanding of other people, her sensitivity to their needs, her superb listening skills, and her ability to offer perceptive, valuable advice to people who were unlike her. Her daughters had mentioned these qualities several times in interviews, but I found little behavioral evidence of them until the end of Fleischman's life, so I previously said little about them. Similarly, although these same interviews had clearly established that the picture she drew of her relationships with her daughters in A Wife Is Many Women was inaccurate, I didn't know how to interpret that picture until I saw the ways she mothered and mentored younger women in Cambridge. The 1960s and 70s helped me better understood her feelings about her daughters and about herself as a mother.

This study points out one reason that research on the last decades of life may be particularly revealing for women journalists. Like most successful women in journalism history, Fleischman violated societal conventions, leading a personal and professional life that did not conform to some key expectations for women of her generation. Her husband and women friends supported her, and she was fortunate that America between the two world wars was considerably more accepting of the kinds of things she did than it was either earlier or later. But a look at her last three decades shows something of the price she paid for her nonconformity. Certainly the pleasures she took in it declined.

What price did other American women journalists pay for challenging traditions in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries? How did these rebellions affect their careers? Their relationships with people they loved? Their feelings about themselves? How did the societal pressures they faced change them? What coping strategies did they develop? How important were other people, such as women friends, in their defiance of social norms? I suspect that many times fully answering these kinds of significant questions requires paying careful attention to the last years of women's lives, when the full costs of their decisions have been added up.

Still, one problem in studying these later years must be acknowledged. In this country, the older people get the more they tend to be ignored by a society that idealizes youth, so historians are likely to find that useful information about their subjects decreases as they age. One advantage of studying 20th-century women, though, is that some people who knew them are likely to be alive, and this will particularly be the case for people who knew them near the end of their lives. So interviews can be the most important source for this period. Yet in my own research, the people who knew Fleischman had less to tell me than I expected because she was not very self-revealing to her new Cambridge friends (or even to her daughters). She seldom discussed either her past or the details of her current personal or professional life, so I learned much less than I had hoped.

But her friends' lack of knowledge did tell me much about Fleischman's modesty, desire for privacy and lack of reliance on others for validation. All of these qualities were connected to the kind of marriage she had and the kind of man she spent so much of her time with, and they likely intensified over the years as the marriage continued. Thus I may have examined them at their most extreme. But the clarity of them in old age did send me back to Fleischman's 1949 article and 1955 book, which purport to be autobiographical but actually offer little reliable information about their author. Her reticence to talk honestly about herself in these publications makes more sense to me now that I better understand her in her later years.

Certainly my most generous interview source was Edward L. Bernays (although I was so late in realizing the importance of the end of Fleischman's life that I asked him too little about that time before he died). I knew better than to take too much of what this consummate public relations man told me as literal truth, but he was willing to talk about any subject I raised and did supply me with valuable details about his wife. He also gave me unfettered access to the many thousands of documents about their business and personal life that he had saved in his home.

Equally valuable was the opportunity to learn who he was and how their "24-hour-a-day partnership" worked. Bernays was unique, to say the least, and he doesn't translate well into words--although he made sure a vast written record was left of his 103 years. But after spending a great deal of time with him while staying at his home during three long Cambridge visits, I feel I can begin to understand their marriage and work partnerships. I now have a good sense of the severe limitations Bernays placed on Fleischman both professionally and personally, but I can also appreciate the opportunities he gave her. I can see ways she was able to work around some of these limitations and adapt to Bernays's non-negotiable directives, just as I can see how much she benefited from her relationship with him, difficult as it was.

For a long time I was puzzled by Bernays's willingness to help me with research that certainly was undermining the sole credit he had so happily received for his public relations work. Their daughter Anne explained some of his motivation when she told me one of his favorite phrases was "reflected glory." I was showing his good sense in marrying and forming a professional partnership with this remarkable woman, she said. "You're flattering him."[136] In addition, he certainly wanted to control the picture I presented of Fleischman and her relationship with him, which his dozens of hours of interviews with me helped him do. But he also encouraged me to talk with his daughters, who often were very critical of him, and he paid no attention to the (sometimes uncomplimentary) documents I repeatedly took to copy after I had rummaged through the materials in his home.

Certainly another reason he supported my work is that he loved Fleischman and wanted to do right by her. He had been devoted to her in many ways, often cared about things that were important to her, and tried to do what he thought would make her happy. When he repeatedly told me they had had a wonderful marriage, it didn't sound like a public relations story. I was convinced he really believed it, and was grateful to Fleischman for making it possible.

Beyond that, he thought she was wonderful, so deserved recognition. He often praised her to others; indeed, the Cambridge friends I talked to had learned far more about Fleischman's abilities and accomplishments from Bernays than from Fleischman herself. They say he frequently bragged about her, showed that he respected her and credited her for good ideas she had had in their public relations work.[137] And he flattered her. As one example, throughout their marriage, when Fleischman said something especially clever or discerning at home, Bernays often reacted by exclaiming, "write that down!" When Fleischman, of course, did not, Bernays dramatically extracted a notebook and, with a flourish, proceeded to write it down himself.[138]

In short, he loved her, admired her, appreciated her and respected her. But since he also thought so highly of himself, he dominated her, intervened in much that she did, kept her from having contacts with clients, and often had a hard time seeing what was really best for her--in part because she adapted so well to him.

I first met Bernays in 1986. When I arrived at his door late and in the rain, he handed me a glass of sherry and two scrapbooks, which I paged through over the next week. One was filled with the 1922 newspaper articles about Fleischman keeping her birth name when she married that are described at the start of this paper. The other contained hundreds of condolence letters Bernays had received when she died. They had been lovingly saved and arranged. He thought they were as important for me to read as the newspaper clippings, because they were as important to him.

Many letters were from people who had known the couple in New York, and most of these writers offered Bernays condolences on the loss of "Miss Fleischman." He admitted that many long-time friends continued to call her by her birth name until her death, so I have done the same. In addition to simplifying my writing (which she probably would have advocated), it's a reminder that, although she never was independent, she never completely retired as either a public relations consultant or a feminist.

NOTES

[1] Many clippings were in a scrapbook in the possession of Edward L. Bernays in 1986, when I examined it; others may be found in box 797, Edward L. Bernays Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC (hereafter LC).

[2] These events and publications are discussed in more depth in Susan Henry, "In Her Own Name? Public Relations Pioneer Doris Fleischman Bernays," paper presented at the annual convention of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, July 1988.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Doris Fleischman Bernays, A Wife Is Many Women (New York: Crown Publishers, 1955).

[5] I've described in more depth my reasons for dismissing these years, and lessons I think can be learned from this, in "Near-Sightedness and Blind Spots in Studying the History of Women in Journalism," paper presented at the American Journalism Historians Conference, Oct. 1990.

[6] Doris E. Fleischman (Bernays), "Notes of a Retiring Feminist," The American Mercury, February 1949, 161-68.

[7] The responses are in the Doris Fleischman Bernays Papers, addenda, file 2, Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliffe College (hereafter Schlesinger Library).

[8] Interview with Doris Held, May 27, 1986, Cambridge, MA; interview with Anne Bernays, October 19, 1995, Cambridge, MA ; interview with Edward L. Bernays, May 24, 1986, Cambridge, MA.

[9] Lois Banner, Women in Modern America: A Brief History (New York: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, 1974), 140.

[10] Interview with Edward L. Bernays, May 24, 1986; letter from Jane Grant to Doris Fleischman, Feb. 2, 1950, carton 1, file 39, Doris Fleischman Bernays Papers, Schlesinger Library

[11] "Lucy Stone Vets Poke Old Embers," (Associated Press), Hartford Times, March 25, 1950; letter from Doris E. Fleischman to Jane Grant, Nov. 3, 1952, carton 1, file 39, Doris Fleischman Bernays Papers, Schlesinger Library.

[12] Letter from Eleanor Nicholes to Doris E. Fleischman, Nov. 30, 1952, carton 1, file 39, Doris Fleischman Bernays Papers, Schlesinger Library.

[13] "Chronology: A Wife Is Many Women," box 797, Edward L. Bernays Papers, LC .

[14] Doris Fleischman Bernays, A Wife Is Many Women, 12, and jacket copy.

[15] This was established repeatedly in interviews with Fleischman's husband and daughters.

[16] Interview with Anne Bernays, Oct. 18, 1995, Cambridge, MA.

[17] An early proposal for the book ended with a list of "some of the people who figure in this story," which contained almost 100 names of prominent men and women. See carton 1, file 9, Doris Fleischman Bernays Papers, Schlesinger Library.

[18] Her daughters have repeatedly stated that much of what is said about them in the book is untrue, as are details of Fleischman's home life. Both of them have called the book fiction. Re-reading the book in light of this knowledge and other things I have learned about Fleischman, I've come to see numerous episodes in the book involving Fleischman as unlikely to have taken place as she describes them.

[19] Interview with Anne Bernays, Oct. 19, 1995.

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[20] See, for example, critiques from C.B. Larrabee in carton 1, file 12, and from Wallace Brockway and Joyce Lubold in carton 1, file 14, Doris Fleischman Bernays Papers, Schlesinger Library.

[21] Doris Flesichman Bernays, A Wife Is Many Women, p. 175.

[22] Undated letter to "Edward " from Wallace Brockway, carton 1, file 14, Doris Fleischman Bernays Papers, Schlesinger Library.

[23] Doris Fleischman Bernays, A Wife Is Many Women, p. 166.

[24] Manuscripts and correspondence on this work are in boxes 473 and 474, Edward L. Bernays Papers, LC; carton 1, files 5 and 6, Doris Fleischman Bernays Papers, Schlesinger Library.

[25] The short stories were Perpetual Emotion (1926), Detective (1931), which may well have been the start of a novel, Dovey (1935), Set and Rock (193), Charming Wife (1944), a childrens story titled The Mother WHo Lost Her Not (1946), Pleasant Dreams, Dr. Gay" (1942), "Last Strike (1946), which was originally written as a short novel, and "Heartless Melita" (1948". In the early 1950s she did a great deal of work on a novel titled "Roads," and her daugher Anne (interview Oct. 18, 1995) remembers her mother showing her the manuscript of a very different science fiction novel around this same time.

Manuscripts and critiques of these stories are in box 475, Edward L. Bernays Papers, LV, and carton 1, files 4, 7, 8, 9 and 11, Dories Fleischman Bernays Papers, Schlesinger Library.

[26] Interview with Edward L. Bernays, May 29, 1986, Cambridge, MA.

[27] See carton 1, files 12-34, and carton 2, files 53-55, Doris Fleischman Bernays Papers, Schlesinger Library, for the record of her research and plans for the book.

[28] For good summaries of these values, see Rosalind Rosenberg, Divided Lives: American Women in the Twentieth Century (New York: Hill and Wang, 1991), 147-57; Robert L. Daniel, American Women in the 20th Century: The Festival of Life (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987), 197-207; William Chafe, The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic and Political Place,1920-1970 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 199-225; Banner, 211-23

[29] Rosenberg,154-57; Banner, 221-23.

[30] Carton 1, files 26, 30 and 34, and carton 2, files 51, 52, 53, 54 and 55, Doris Fleischman Bernays Papers, Schlesinger Library, contain some of Fleischman's research notes taken in preparation for her book. There are numerous notes from books that helped define women's roles in this period, and also from feminist responses to these books.

[31] I am grateful to Anne Bernays and Doris Held who, through several interviews, have helped me better understand their mother at the time she wrote this book, and who are responsible for much that led me to the conclusions in this paragraph.

[32] Interviews with Doris Held, Oct. 18, 1995, and May 27, 1986.

[33] League members' names were taken from "Lucy Stoners to Reorganize," New York World, March 23, 1950, and "What Is the Lucy Stone League Doing for American Women?" pamphlet in addenda, file 3, Doris Fleischman Bernays Papers, Schlesinger Library. Some of Fleischman's activities for the league are documented in carton 1, files 40, 41 and 42, Doris Fleischman Bernays Papers.

[34] "What Is the Lucy Stone League Doing for American Women?" cover page.

[35] "Lucy Stone Vets Poke Old Embers."

[36] Interview with Anne Bernays, Oct. 19, 1995.

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[37] Untitled histories of the Woman Pays Club by Helen Zotoa (Feb. 2, 1959) and Beulah Livingstone (1959), and 1959 press release from Doris Fleischman Bernays, all in carton 1, file 42, Doris Flesichman Bernays Papers, Schlesinger Library.

[38] This information is taken from dozens of sources in carton 1, files 42 and 44, Doris Fleischman Bernays Papers, Schlesinger Library, and box 476, Edward L. Bernays Papers, LC.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Mary Prime ,"Competition of Men Is Hard to Buck, Career Woman Says," Battle Creek Enquirer-News, (United Press International), March 4, 1959.

[41] Letter from Doris F. Bernays to Caroline Simon, Feb. 12, 1962, carton 1, file 42, Doris Fleischman Bernays Papers, Schlesinger Library.

[42] Interview with Edward L. Bernays, March 29, 1988, Cambridge, MA.

[43] Edward L. Bernays, Biography of an Idea: Memoirs of Public Relations Counsel Edward L. Bernays (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965), 815.

[44] Interview with Edward L. Bernays, Oct. 26, 1989.

[45] Interview with Anne Bernays, Oct. 19, 1995.

[46] Edward L. Bernays, Biography of an Idea, 805.

[47] Ibid; interview with Doris Held, May 27, 1986.

[48] Scott M. Cutlip, The Unseen Power: Public Relations. A History (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1994), 160, 188-89, 214-18; Richard S. Tedlow, Keeping the Corporate Image: Public Relations and Business, 1900-1950 (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press), 158.

[49] Edward L. Bernays, Biography of an Idea, 232.

[50] Correspondence with Anne Bernays, March 11, 1996.

[51] Audiotape of an interview with Doris Fleischman Bernays by MaryAnn Yodelis, July 1973.

[52] This description is based on my own observations made when I stayed in the house during three long visits to Cambridge, on interviews with Anne Bernays Oct. 28, 1989, and Oct. 19, 1995, and on "N.Y. Writing Team Buying in Cambridge," Boston Sunday Herald, Aug. 26, 1962.

[53] Telephone interview with Camille Roman, Nov. 20, 1995, Portland, OR.

[54] Interview with Doris Fleischman Bernays by MaryAnnYodelis.

[55] Carol Liston, "Editor-Crusader-Housewife Now a Novelist at 74," Boston Globe, Dec. 15, 1965; Ann Bradley, "A Truly Feminine Feminist," Washington Evening Star, Feb. 25, 1966; interview with Anne Bernays, Oct. 19, 1995. Her driving lessons and tests are recorded in the couple's 1965 appointment calendar, author's possession.

[56] Interview with Camille Roman.

[57] Interview with Doris Held, Oct. 18, 1995.

[58] Interview with Anne Bernays, Oct. 19, 1995.

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[59] Interviews with Edward L. Bernays, May 28, 1986, Oct. 26, 1989.

[60] Elinor Hayes, "New Job for Opinion Molder," Oakland Tribune, Aug. 18, 1968.

[61] Much of this work is described in boxes 752-757, Edward L. Bernays Papers, LC. Also see Cutlip, 222, and Ann Shaw, "Bernays--a master of human nature," The Sunday Sun (Lowell, MA), Sept. 25, 1977.

[62] Interview with Edward L. Bernays, May 28, 1986.

[63] Letter to Russell R. Jalbert from Edward L. Bernays, Oct. 12, 1970, box 750, Edward L. Bernays Papers, LC.

[64] Letter to Dr. Harold Ruvin from Edward L. Bernays, April 15, 1969, Edward L. Bernays Papers, LC.

[65] Manuscript of an article prepared for publication in the Bay State Librarian, box 748, Edward. L. Bernays Papers, LC.

[66] Materials relating to these kinds of campaigns are in boxes 750 and 751, Edward L. Bernays Papers, LC.

[67] This work is described in about a dozen documents in carton 2, file 49, Doris Fleischman Bernays Papers, Schlesinger Library.

[68] See Henry, "In Her Own Name? Public Relations Pioneer Doris Fleischman Bernays," 9-10.

[69] Interviews with Edward L. Bernays, May 28, 1986, Oct. 26, 1989, Oct. 30, 1989.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Interview with Anne Bernays, Oct. 27, 1989.

[72] Interview with Edward L. Bernays, March 26, 1988.

[73] I am grateful to Caroline Iverson Ackerman for helping me understand the reasons for Bernays's increasing involvement in public relations education once he moved to Cambridge.

[74] Interview with Anne Bernays, Oct. 19, 1995.

[75] Cutlip, 220; interview with Edward L. Bernays, March 26, 1988.

[76] Interview with Anne Bernays, Oct. 27, 1989; correspondence with Anne Bernays, March 11, 1996.

[77] Interview with Eleanor Genovese, Oct. 19, 1995, Wellesley, MA.

[78] Interview with Doris Held, Oct. 18, 1995.

[79] Interview with Eleanor Genovese.

[80] Interview with Camille Roman.

[81] Interview with Doris Held, Oct. 18, 1995; interview with Anne Bernays, Oct. 19, 1995.

[82] Interview with Caroline Iverson Ackerman, Oct. 16, 1995, South Natick, MA; correspondence with Caroline Iverson Ackerman, March 4, 1996.

[83] Ibid.

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[84] Theta Sigma Phi membership certificate, carton 2, file 47, Doris Fleischman Bernays Papers, Schlesinger Library.

[85] Interview with Caroline Iverson Ackerman, Oct. 16, 1995.

[86] Ibid.

[87] Interview with Doris Fleischman Bernays by MaryAnn Yodelis.

[88] Interview with Camille Roman.

[89] Ibid.

[90] Interview with Eleanor Genovese.

[91] "PR Pioneer Joins Women's Press Group," Herald Traveler and Boston Record American, Oct. 13, 1972.

[92] Interview with Anne Bernays, Oct. 28, 1989.

[93] I became particularly aware of this when I interviewed two of her Boston-area friends, Caroline Iverson Ackerman and Eleanor Genovese, and learned how little they knew about many aspects of her life.

[94] Interview with Eleanor Genovese.

[95] Interview with Doris Held, Oct. 18, 1995; interview with Anne Bernays, Oct. 19, 1995.

[96] Doris Fleischman Bernays, A Wife Is Many Women, 12, 192-205; unpublished notes, carton 1, files 27, 31, 33, Doris Fleischman Bernays Papers, Schlesinger Library.

[97] Helen S. Williams, "'A Wife Is Many Women' Said Written in Haphazard Style," Chattanooga News Free Press, Feb. 29, 1956.

[98] Interview with Doris Held, Oct. 18, 1995.

[99] Interview with Caroline Iverson Ackerman, Oct. 16, 1995.

[100] The speeches and newspaper articles are in carton 2, files 48 and 49, Doris Fleischman Bernays Papers, Schlesinger Library.

[101] Interview with Frank Genovese, Oct. 19, 1995, Wellesley, MA.

[102] Quoted in Keith A. Larson, Public Relations, the Edward L. Bernayses and the American Scene: A Bibliography (Westwood, MA: F. W. Faxon Company, 1978), 22.

[103] Interview with Doris Held, Oct. 19, 1995.

[104] Form letter announcing the competition from Caroline I. Ackerman, Jury of Award chairman, to journalism professors, May 9, 1974, author's possession.

[105] Interview with Caroline Iverson Ackerman, Oct. 16, 1995; "Rules of Competition," author's possession.

[106] "Ten-point plan developed to advance women in media," Editor& Publisher, Sept. 27, 1975, 11.

[107] Babson College news release, "Babson College Sponsors Edward L. Bernays Award for A Practical Program To Achieve Economic Justice for Homemakers," author's possession.

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[108] Nickie McWhirter, "Pay for homemakers: You have any ideas?" Detroit Free Press, Sept. 13, 1978; Babson-Bernays Competition news release, "The Truth Shall Make You Free Applies to Homemakers," and letter from Frank Genovese to Babson College faculty and administrators, Dec. 27, 1977, both author's possession.

[109] Doris E. Fleischman, ed., An Outline of Careers for Women: A Practical Guide to Achievement; Doris E. Fleischman, "Women in Business," Ladies' Home Journal, Jan. 1930, 16,17, 59-62.

[110] Interview with Caroline Iverson Ackerman, Oct. 15, 1995; "Ten-point plan developed to advance women in media."

[111] Interview with Frank Genovese.

[112] Anne Bernays, untitled essay in Constance Warloe, ed., I've Always Meant to Tell You: Letters to Our Mothers, An Anthology of Women Writers (New York: Pocket Books, in press); interview with Anne Bernays, May 27, 1986.

[113] Interview with Eleanor Genovese.

[114] Quoted in Liston, "Editor-Crusader-Housewife Now a Novelist at 74,"

[115] Undated (probably late 1973) letter, "Dear Adele," carton 2, file 43, Doris Fleischman Bernays Papers, Schlesinger Library.

[116] Doris Fleischman Bernays, Progression (Cambridge, MA: Beech Tree Press, 1977).

[117] Interview with Edward L. Bernays, Oct. 30, 1989; interview with Anne Bernays, Oct. 19, 1995; interview with Caroline Iverson Ackerman, Oct. 16, 1995. Progression contains a reprint of her first published poem, which appeared in World Court in 1916.

[118] Doris Fleischman Bernays, "Plus Ca Change, Plus C'Est La Meme Chose," Phantasm, Sept./Oct. 1977, 4.

[119] Interview with Doris Held, Oct. 19, 1995; interview with Anne Bernays, Oct. 19, 1995.

[120] Doris Fleischman Bernays, "Progression," Progression, 11.

[121] Interview with Eleanor Genovese; interview with Caroline Iverson Ackerman, Oct. 15, 1995.

[122] Interview with Doris Held, Oct. 19, 1995.

[123] Interview with Camille Roman; interview with Eleanor Genovese.

[124] Journal kept by Doris Fleischman Bernays, April-May 1980, possession of Edward L. Bernays.

[125] "Doris Fleischman Bernays, public relations pioneer, 88," Boston Globe, July 12, 1980.

[126] Interview with Anne Bernays, May 27, 1986.

[127] For example, she mentioned her concerns with women's household tasks in four newspaper interviews--Claire Leeds, "You Could . . . Should Snap Those Household Shackles," undated, uncredited newspaper, but probably 1963, addenda, file 3, Doris Fleischman Bernays Papers, Schlesinger Library; Gloria Ohlinger, "Papers for the Library, Help for the Housewife," Washington Daily News, Feb. 23, 1966; Beth Duncan, "You Haven't Come Such a Long Way, Baby," Boston Advertiser, Dec. 12, 1971; Connie Lunnen, "Early Crusader Says Feminists Today Are Sour On Men," Houston Chronicle, Oct. 6, 1972--as well as in her 1973 interview with MaryAnn Yodelis and in her 1972 Theta Sigma Phi Headliner Award speech.

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[128] Interview with Edward L. Bernays, Oct. 30, 1989.

[129] Interview with Caroline Iverson Ackerman, Oct. 16, 1995.

[130] Interview with Eleanor Genovese.

[131] The note on "Drought" in Fleischman's book of poetry, Progression, says that it was published in the Globe on Aug. 26, 1965.

[132] "Chronology: A Wife Is Many Women."

[133] See footnote 20.

[134] The galley proofs of "The Last Strike," printing records and much correspondence about it are in box 475, Edward L. Bernays Papers, LC.

[135] Letter from Doris E. Fleischman to Dexter W. Masters, Oct. 30, 1947, ibid.

[136] Interview with Anne Bernays, Oct. 27, 1989.

[137] Interview with Camille Roman; interview with Eleanor Genovese; interview with Caroline Iverson Ackerman, Oct. 16, 1995.

[138] Interview with Anne Bernays, Oct. 18, 1995; correspondence with Anne Bernays, March 11, 1996.

" 'Of Enduring Interest': The First Issue of *The Reader's Digest* as a 'Snapshot' of America in 1922 --and its Legacy in a Mass-Market Culture"

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ABSTRACT

of a paper presented to the Magazine Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Anaheim, Calif., August 1996

The first issue of *The Reader's Digest*, dated February 1922, offers a picture of America at a crossroads, a period of transition from the Progressive era to the consumerism, nativism, and self-absorption of the 1920s. In its standardization and its editorial goals of convenience and efficiency, "the little magazine"--which one historian has called "the journalistic counterpart of the Model T or the A&P"--was the perfect symbol of its time. Yet the lasting success of the magazine's original editorial formula offers a broader perspective on twentieth-century mass culture as well. This paper analyzes the text of the debut issue against its historical context and considers its cultural legacy. It argues why America's most plainspoken, upbeat magazine should indeed be (as its founding editor promised) "of enduring interest" to media historians and critics.

“Of Enduring Interest”:

The First Issue of *The Reader’s Digest* as a “Snapshot” of America in 1922 – and its Legacy in a Mass-Market Culture

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A paper presented to the Magazine Division
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"Of Enduring Interest":

The First Issue of *The Reader's Digest* as a "Snapshot" of America in 1922 -- and its Legacy in a Mass-Market Culture

The 1920s in America have been characterized by historians and popular-culture critics as "the Jazz Age," a time of flappers and speakeasies; as an era of profound disillusionment following World War I, producing a "lost generation" of youth; as a decade of 100-percent Americanism and mindless conformity; and as a turning point in the history of technology, the heyday of mass production. None of these descriptions is sufficient to explain this complex decade, but all of them hold some truth. And most of these trends were already evident in 1922 to DeWitt Wallace, an entrepreneur with a "talent for divining what sociologists call the mass mind."[1] That year he started a new magazine called *The Reader's Digest*.

"The little magazine," as its subtitle read in its first issue, offered readers 31 articles (one for each day of the month) of practical value and "enduring interest" in condensed form--the "best" of the offerings of dozens of other magazines and newspapers. In its scope, its articles' length, and even its size--small enough "for slipping into a coat pocket or a purse"[2]--the new magazine was a model of efficiency. Seventy-four years later, the *Digest* is so well-known that little of this needs explanation. But in 1922 such a publication was a revolutionary idea that changed the publishing business. One historian calls the early Digest "the journalistic counterpart of the Model T or the A&P."[3] Another noted that

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[1] John Bainbridge, *Little Wonder:* The Reader's Digest *and How It Grew* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1945), 5.

> What Ford [did] in automobile manufacturing, Wallace [did] in publishing. Ford gave Everyman a car he could drive, [and] Wallace gave Everyman some literature he could read; both turned the trick with mass production . . . . Wallace has . . . made history by adapting the assembly-line technique to the production of literature.[4]

In its standardization and mass dissemination, the *Digest* was--as an idea and as a consumer product--a significant symbol of America in the 1920s. The content of the original *Digest* also reflected America's transition from the Progressive era of the first two decades of the twentieth century to the consumerism, nativism, and self-absorption of its third decade. The topics covered and opinions expressed in the magazine's earliest pages are representative of *both* eras and in this sense offer a picture frozen in time--a snapshot--of America just after World War I.

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[2] John Heidenry, *Theirs Was the Kingdom: Lila and DeWitt Wallace and the Story of* The Reader's Digest (New York: Norton, 1993), 41.
[3] Paul Boyer, et al., *The Enduring Vision: A History of the American People*, vol. II, 2nd ed. (Lexington, Mass.: Heath, 1993), 814.
[4] Bainbridge, 175-76.

Nevertheless, there was something timeless in the very first issue of the *Digest*, and the fact that it is one of the oldest surviving general-interest magazines[5] links its early themes to modern-day ideas. The same formula that was pleasing to a large audience in the 1920s is still pleasing to a large audience today. In this sense, the *Digest* offers a panoramic view of America in the twentieth century.

This paper offers an examination of the debut issue of *The Reader's Digest* in its historical context. Such an approach is an attempt to combine conventional historical method with the textual analysis more common to print-media research--to closely study one document, but less as evidence of magazine journalism's influence on a culture than as a product of the culture's influence on magazine journalism. It asks the question: Why did this type of journalism begin in this time and place? It also considers why a particular editorial concept has experienced lasting success *beyond* one time and place--thus raising questions about how we might characterize American mass culture in a broader sense.

America in 1922

The year *The Reader's Digest* was born, American social, political, and economic conditions combined to create a friendly climate for DeWitt Wallace's

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[5] Amy Janello and Brennon Jones, *The American Magazine* (New York: Abrams, 1991), 231-35. At least 40 consumer magazines on the market today are older than the *Digest*, but only one, the *Saturday Evening Post* (founded in 1821) is a general-interest magazine that achieved the mass-market appeal and visibility of the *Digest*. Unlike the *Digest*, the *Post* has not published continuously. Among the other survivors, those with truly mass-market circulations (i.e., around or above five million), are all women's magazines: *McCall's* (1876), *Ladies' Home Journal* (1883), *Good Housekeeping* (1885), and *Redbook* (1903). However, another extremely influential twentieth-century magazine, *Time*--which, though a news magazine, might also be classified as "general interest"--would be founded in 1923, one year after the *Digest*'s debut.

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editorial vision. A post-war recession had finally ended, and with economic recovery came a pro-business attitude on the part of the federal government, under a generally disinterested President Warren G. Harding. Supreme Court decisions of the early 1920s also reversed working-class gains made during the Progressive era: restrictions on child labor were eliminated, and striking unions were once again subject to anti-trust prosecution.[6]

The corporate progress of the early 1920s was matched by social regression. Popular-culture images of women changed dramatically: the model of the female reformer--who during the Progressive era had campaigned to improve public health, and who after 70 years of suffrage agitation had finally won the vote in 1920--was replaced with the ideal of the flapper, a "shameless, selfish" creature interested in money and sex who "takes a man's point of view as her mother never could."[7]

Popular images and opinion of African Americans and other minorities were worse. During the first few years of the twenties, movements such as the Harlem Renaissance and Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Assocation seemed to offer hope for the improvement of African Americans' social and economic status; the rising popularity of jazz also showcased talented blacks such as Louis Armstrong, whose name became nationally known in 1922 as he emerged on the Chicago jazz scene. But white hatred grew in equal proportion to blacks' success.

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[6] Mary Beth Norton, et al., *A People and a Nation: A History of the United States*, vol. II, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton, 1986), 682-83.

[7] George E. Mowry, *The Twenties: Fords, Flappers & Fanatics* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, 1963), 174.

In 1922, a Texas dentist named Hiram Wesley Evans, who described himself as "the most average man in America,"[8] became Imperial Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, which had been in decline since the turn of the century. Evans transformed the group's demographics by using modern advertising techniques and a recruitment-bonus program to attract college-educated professionals, many of them urban. Between 1920 and 1925, Klan membership grew from 5,000 members to five million. This newer version of the organization targeted Jews and Catholics as well as blacks.[9]

Nativism in America extended beyond extremist groups. Writing just after World War I, New York city attorney and zoologist Madison Grant warned "native Americans" of the danger that the country would be "vulgarized" by the millions of immigrants arriving from southern and eastern Europe and from Russia, "the lowest stratum" of foreigners whose large families promised "the survival of the unfit." In 1922, the Supreme Court ruled that Japanese immigrants were not eligible for U. S. citizenship because they were not members of the "white race." Two years later, Congress passed the National Origins Act, which served to severely restrict immigration from non-English speaking countries.[10]

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[8] Boyer, 824.

[9] Elizabeth Stevenson, *Babbitts and Bohemians: The American 1920s* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 99. An article by Hiram Wesley Evans himself, titled "The Klan: Defender of Americanism"--primarily an attack on Jews--would appear in the January 1926 issue of the *Digest* (Heidenry, 66).

[10] Madison Grant, "Madison Grant on the New Immigrants as Survival of the Unfit, 1918," rpt. in Leon Fink, ed., *Major Problems in the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era* (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath, 1993), 262-64; Edmund Traverso and Van R. Halsey, *The 1920s: Rhetoric or Reality?* (Boston: Heath, 1964), 99; Boyer, 823.

Nativism and racism were integral parts of what Thorstein Veblen, writing in 1922, described as the "unreflecting patriotic flurry [that had] become a civic virtue" in the United States.[11] Another social critic of the day, Harold Stearns, lamented the "enforced dull standardization" sweeping the country, not only in politics, but also in business and home life.[12] Though they had been formulated in the teens, the "scientific management" principles of Frederick Winslow Taylor were widely applied in American corporations during the 1920s, and this phenomenon, along with the assembly line, made the work experience of Americans increasingly uniform.[13]

At home, Americans lived in structures that resembled each other on the outside, as housing developments sprung up and suburbia flourished, and also looked more and more alike on the inside, thanks to the furniture and the kitchen and bathroom accessories mass-produced by companies like Sears. By the early 1920s, nearly half of all non-farm dwellings had electricity , enabling their occupants to use mass-produced electric appliances--which in turn allowed them to store, and quickly prepare meals with, groceries bought in bulk at the more than 5,000 A&P chain food stores. During the decade when "the automobile became a 'necessity' for Americans," however, dinner was sometimes picked up at one of the growing number of drive-through fast-food establishments. Clothing was also mass-produced, and women were squeezing into the first dresses made according to standardized sizes.[14]

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[11] Thorstein Veblen, "Dementia Praecox," *The Freeman* (June 21, 1922), rpt. in Loren Baritz, ed., *The Culture of the Twenties* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970), 37.
[12] Harold Stearns, "The Intellectual Life," *Civilization in the United States* (New York: Harcourt, 1922), rpt. in Baritz, 348.
[13] Traverso, 48.

Americans were increasingly better able to compare their possessions and lifestyles to those of their neighbors, since they were living in closer proximity to one another: the 1920 census had shown that, for the first time, more people lived in cities than in rural areas.[15] This concentration of the population, along with advances in transportation (including road-paving), increased Americans' access to goods and services, at the same time that the relatively new technique of national advertising increased their awareness of, and desire for, mass-produced products. Many of the new consumers agreed with the fictional George Babbitt--the title character of Sinclair Lewis's 1922 novel, whose name has become synonymous with unthinking conformity--that "standard advertised wares--toothpastes, socks, tires, cameras, instantaneous hot-water heaters--were . . . symbols and proofs of excellence."[16]

Even the ways Americans were entertained and informed became uniform. Every week in 1922, 40 million people sat in movie houses across the country to watch the same films.[17] By that year, ten magazines had circulations above

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[14] Harvey Green, *The Uncertainty of Everyday Life, 1915-1945* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), 113; Ruth Schwartz Cowan, "The 'Industrial Revolution' in the Home: Household Technology and Social Change in the Twentieth Century," rpt. in Linda K. Kerber and Jane Sherron De Hart, *Women's America: Refocusing the Past*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 375; Boyer, 802; Robert S. McElvaine, *The Great Depression: America, 1929-1941* (New York: Times Books, 1984), 18; Joan Jacobs Brumberg, "Fasting Girls: The Emerging Ideal of Slenderness in American Culture," rpt. in Kerber and De Hart, 369-70.

[15] McElvaine, 19.

[16] Sinclair Lewis, *Babbitt* (New York: Harcourt, 1922), 81.

[17] Norton, 699.

2.5 million each.[18] At the same time their publications gained readers, however, editors struggled with the fact that those readers were busy and distracted people; according to a survey cited in Walter Lippmann's 1922 book *Public Opinion*, even college-educated Americans spent no more than 15 minutes a day with their newspapers or magazines.[19] Readers were

> . . . tiring of long investigative pieces by muckrakers like Tarbell and Steffens, not to mention their relentlessly gloomy portrayal of U. S. business and society. Shorter articles and even news summaries were now in vogue. *Liberty* magazine had gone so far as to post, at the head of each article, the reading time; . . . . *Collier's* had pioneered the brief article and was experimenting with the one-page short story. Soon almost every popular magazine, including the *Saturday Evening Post*, was beginning to shorten its once formidably long short stories and features.[20]

A 32-year-old man in Minnesota, just back from the European war, noticed these very changes--in the many magazines he read every month, and in the society around him. "We're living in a fast-moving world," he told his father one day. "People are anxious to get at the nub of matters."[21] That man was DeWitt Wallace.

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[18] Boyer, 812.
[19] Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York: Macmillan, 1922), 38.
[20] Heidenry, 42.
[21] Bainbridge, 36.

The Founder of "The Little Magazine"

In his 1922 book, *American Individualism*, then-Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover wrote that America's "social, economic, and intellectual progress is almost solely dependent upon the creative minds of those individuals . . . who carry discoveries to widespread application."[22] He surely was thinking of men such as Alexander Graham Bell, Thomas Edison, and Henry Ford--all praised in the first issue of *The Reader's Digest*--but his description fit DeWitt Wallace as well.

Nothing in DeWitt Wallace's adolescence foreshadowed greatness.[23] The son of a midwestern Presbyterian preacher and college president, DeWitt was a self-described playboy and a two-time college dropout who couldn't seem to settle on any one occupation. One of his many jobs was going door-to-door through the midwestern states selling maps, an experience that "gave him an insight into people's need for practical information--as opposed to the academic knowledge so prized by his father."[24] With money he earned from this job, he bought a Model T.

DeWitt enjoyed reading magazines, and he combed through them looking for tips on salesmanship and efficiency. Working for a publisher of farming catalogs, he came up with the idea for a "digest" of farming advice, and he convinced his employer to finance his plan. The resulting publication was called "Getting the

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[22] Herbert Hoover, *American Individualism* (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1922), partially rpt. in Baritz, 236.

[23] The following biographical information about DeWitt and Lila Wallace, including the events leading to the first issue of the *Digest*, is from several sources: Bainbridge; Heidenry; Samuel A. Schreiner, Jr., *The Condensed World of* The Reader's Digest (New York: Stein & Day, 1977); and James Playsted Wood, *Of Lasting Interest: The Story of* The Reader's Digest (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1967).

[24] Heidenry, 31.

Most Out of Farming" and contained what DeWitt considered the the most useful information in the many government-issued farming bulletins. He had 100,000 copies printed and, in 1916, he went on a five-state selling tour, trying to convince bank and seed-store managers to buy the booklets in bulk and give them out as premiums to their customers. Though in the end he made very little profit, he sold all 100,000 copies, and he found evidence for his belief "that what the average hardworking American family most wanted in a publication was information."[25]

DeWitt's budding publishing career was suspended when he enlisted in the Army after the U. S.'s entry into World War I and was sent to France, where he was wounded by gunfire. During his six months of recuperation, he read American magazines given to the hospitalized soldiers. "Instead of doing crossword puzzles or playing chess," writes John Heidenry, "DeWitt relaxed by practicing condensation techniques on the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Vanity Fair*, and *Scribner's*," trying to cut them to a fourth of their original size "while retaining both their style and their substance. He decided, on returning to the States, to publish another booklet--to be called *The Reader's Digest*."[26]

Back home in Minnesota, he began gathering and condensing articles from magazines in the Minneapolis Public Library. By early 1920, his 64-page prototype--containing what would become the standard 31 articles--was ready. He sent it to publishers all over the country, only to have it rejected by every one of them, including William Randolph Hearst, who said such a magazine would have a limited appeal and a small circulation. By the end of 1920, DeWitt decided his luck might be better in New York, the heart of the publishing industry. There, he married Lila Bell Acheson, a social worker and the younger sister of a friend.

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[25] Heidenry, 37.
[26] Heidenry, 40.

The two set about selling subscriptions to the *Digest*, working from office space they rented at One Minetta Lane in the city's Greenwich Village--in the basement of a speakeasy (whose customers helped them wrap the first mailing of the magazine!). The fact that a conservative publication meant to appeal to Main Street U. S. A. was born in such a building was supremely ironic; so was the neighborhood, which at the time was home to radical writers Max Eastman and John Reed and the experimental Provincetown Playhouse, where the works of avant-garde playwrights, including Eugene O'Neil, were being staged.[27]

The First Issue

Finally, with a $5,000 loan from Lila's brother, the Wallaces printed and mailed 5,000 copies of the first issue, which DeWitt had compiled from magazines in the New York Public Library. It was dated February 1922 and was a small and somber-looking publication--63 pages of text with no illustrations.[28] On its understated cover was the magazine's name, a small line drawing of a woman writing with a large quill on a scroll,[29] and a blurb: "Thirty-One Articles Each Month from Leading Magazines--Each Article of Enduring Value and Interest, in Condensed and Compact Form." Inside were articles from 27 magazines of the day,[30] including *McClure's*, *Good Housekeeping*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Popular Science*, *The Ladies' Home Journal*, *The American Magazine*, and *Scribner's*. Most had been condensed to a length of two pages, and a few occupied only one page.

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[27] The Wallaces' choice of the Village for the *Digest*'s first office seems even more ironic in light of Adele Heller and Lois Rudnick's description of its Modernist residents during the teens and early twenties: "Free thinkers and lovers . . . united by their fight against those tendencies in American life that were driving their fellow citizens in the direction of increasing standardization, mechanization, and materialism" (Adele Heller and Lois Rudnick, eds., *1915: The Cultural Moment: The New Politics, the New Woman, the New Psychology, the New Art & the New Theatre in America* (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1991), 3.)

[28] *The Reader's Digest* (February 1922). Subsequent references to and quotations from articles in this issue are attributed by indicating page numbers parenthetically in the main text.

The editor's page, signed by Lila rather than DeWitt (an effort to woo women readers), referred to the publication as "The Little Magazine" and listed four reasons the modern reader would come to value the *Digest*:

> 1. Thirty-one articles each month--"one a day"--condensed from leading periodicals.
>
> 2. Each article of enduring value and interest--today, next month, or a year hence; such articles as one talks about and wishes to remember.
>
> 3. Compact form; easy to carry in the pocket and to keep for permanent reference.
>
> 4. A most convenient means of "keeping one's information account open"--of reading stimulating articles on a wide variety of subjects.

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[29] The choice of this illustration was not a matter of careful deliberation. According to James Wood, "It was an ornament the . . . printer happened to have in his case. There had been no money to spare for art." Except for this cover art, which would be reused for several years, there would be no illustrations in *The Reader's Digest* for another 17 years. (Wood, 36, 159)

[30] There were also three book excerpts and a reprinted newspaper column.

Given the pro-business atmosphere of the twenties, the banking metaphor in the fourth point is particularly fitting. The fact that this pitch was made in a *list* is also significant. Twenty-four of the first issue's articles took the form of lists: each point the author made was actually numbered. This technique served to further standardize the style and readability of the early *Digest* articles.[31]

Although the issue did not contain advertisements--and the magazine would not include any until 1955[32]--a promotional blurb, used as filler, was cloaked in the advertising lingo of the day, phrased in terms of consumer *need* and *status*: "*The Reader's Digest* has come into existence because *you* felt that such a magazine would fill a real need--even before you had actually seen a copy . . . . *The Reader's Digest* is to be regarded as an exclusive *service* to members of our Association" (p. 63). The issue also contained an article praising advertising as the medium through which millions of Americans learned about nutrition, sanitation, home heating, medicines, and other aspects of progress that promoted health and longevity (pp. 59-60).

This emphasis on scientific advancement and efficiency--which reflected both the Progressive era's value of factual knowledge and the America-first attitude of the twenties--was evident as well in other articles. One, titled "Progress in Science" and containing information condensed from features in *Scientific American* and

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[31] Proof that the list format was successful can be seen not only in the success of the *Digest*, but also in the fact that hundreds of other consumer magazines began to use it frequently; it survives today as one of the most common article formats in mass-market magazines.
[32] Wood, 225.

Popular Science, reported new developments including the radio telephone (i. e., telephones on ships); real-estate dealers' use of aerial photography to promote property sales; the artificial coloring of oranges; and lie-detector machines (pp. 35-36). A one-page feature titled "Today" contained science trivia, including current life expectancy and how many volts of electricity there were in a flash of lightning (p. 42). Other articles explained how fireflies light up (pp. 37-38) and told the history of time-telling (pp. 25-26) and of the printing press (pp. 55-56). Articles explaining technology and nature would quickly become a staple of the magazine's editorial offerings.

Although it was condensed from *The Nation's Business*, the article "Research and Everyday Life" (pp. 47-48) could just as well have been taken from a science magazine, or from one of the women's magazines of the day, which were equally concerned with scientific progress.[33] Its theme was that housework was a scientific endeavor linked to chemistry and physics, and it cited the results of experiments, conducted at the University of Pittsburgh's Mellon Institute, involving laundry, baking, canning, and household cleaning.

In contrast to such seemingly benign applications of scientific language, the *Digest*, along with other magazines of the day, used scientific arguments to justify nativism. The message of "Can We Have a Beautiful Race?" (pp. 43-44), condensed from a magazine called *Physical Culture*, was that America would soon be full of ugly, stupid, and immoral people because of immigration and high birth rates among foreign-born residents. The author explained,

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[33] The best example was *Good Housekeeping*, which in 1908 had established the Good Housekeeping Institute, staffed with chemists, engineers, and nutritionists who evaluated the new mass-produced products and offered a "Seal of Approval." (The Institute continues to do this today.) Advertisers as well as editors glorified housework in terms of "domestic science." "Home economics" emerged as a new professional field for women during the second decade of the twentieth century, and homemakers were suddenly "technicians" and "consumers."

> I have studied thousands of women unloaded at Ellis Island. They are broad-hipped, short-, stout-legged with big feet; broad-backed, flat-chested with necks like a prize fighter and with faces as expressionless and devoid of beauty as a pumpkin.
>
> These women are giving us nearly *three* babies where the beautiful women of old American stocks are giving us *one*; hence, the beauty of the American women will steadily decline . . . .
>
> The moment we lose beauty we lose intelligence . . . . All the studies that have been made show that beauty and brains are in quite a high degree associated. It has also been shown that people with brains are usually better morally . . . .

Closely related to the pervasive theme of scientific progress was the emphasis on self-improvement. Like the magazine as a whole, this focus was both pioneering in the magazine industry (self-help articles quickly became a component of most other mass-market magazines and remain a part of their editorial mix) and emblematic of its time. Theodore Babbitt--son of the title character of Lewis's novel, who cut out ads for correspondence-school courses on "Improving the Memory," "Developing the Soul-Power," and how to "Be More Popular and Make More Money" (p. 71)--would surely have been drawn to the *Digest*.

The first issue contained self-improvement articles including "To Bore or Not to Bore" (pp. 51-52), a piece on how to be an engaging host or guest; "Don't Growl--Kick" (pp. 61-62), a guide to effective complaining; and "Useful Points in Judging People" (pp. 33-34), excerpted from the manual of the National Salesman's Training Association. "How to Keep Young Mentally" (pp. 5-6) was an interview with the then-75-year-old Alexander Graham Bell.

As in the latter piece, expert input was an important component of the *Digest*; in fact, several articles in the first issues were actually written by experts.[34] Thomas Edison defined the qualities of a good business executive, as determined by a questionnaire he had devised (pp. 13-14). Albert Payson Terhune, author of the popular novel *Lad--a Dog*, told what humans could learn from canines (pp. 19-20). Brigadier General Amos A. Fries, identified as "Chief of Chemical Warfare Service, U. S. A.," predicted "The Future of Poison Gas" (pp. 31-32). Rear Admiral Cary T. Grayson offered "Advice from a President's Physician" (pp. 45-46).

The Grayson article was condensed from *Good Housekeeping*, and a number of women's magazines were represented in the first issue of the *Digest*. In his attempt to draw women readers, DeWitt Wallace devoted a relatively large number of articles to their concerns, especially marriage and motherhood.

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[34] From the start, the expert byline was a common feature in the *Digest*, as it has been in other American mass-market magazines since then. This technique was not, however, a creation of the *Digest*; it had been pioneered by the *Ladies' Home Journal* in the late-nineteenth century and further advanced during the first decade of the twentieth century by muckraking magazines like *McClure's*.

Some of these articles were lighthearted and modern. "What Kind of Husband Are You?"--ostensibly addressed to male readers, but clearly for women's enjoyment--listed the many thoughtless little things men do around the house to annoy their wives (pp. 29-30); the satirical "Whatever Is New for Women Is Wrong" (pp. 15-16), condensed from the *Ladies' Home Journal*, poked fun at men's criticism of women's political and social gains throughout history.

Others were less approving of contemporary American women. One chided mothers for keeping "the apron strings" tied to their teenage sons (no mention is made of daughters), who were ready to go out into the world and become men (pp. 11-12). This article is a wonderful example of both the scientific references and the masculinity that typified the language of many 1920s magazines and books: praising boys' clubs such as the Boy Scouts and the "Junior Achievement Bureau" as excellent transitions to manhood, the author told mothers, "it's a scientific fact that a human instinct cannot be stifled at a time when it naturally crops out."

Two articles were openly critical of "the New Woman." "Love--Luxury or Necessity" (pp. 23-24) listed scientific reasons why "to be really emancipated from love or the need of loving is to be abnormal" and "to imagine that the activities of the independent and self-sufficient woman of today have emancipated her from the simple emotional necessities of life is to make a mistake which may in the long run be costly." The even more strongly worded "Wanted--Motives for Motherhood" (pp. 39-40) called childless wives "parasites." Its female writer--who felt she and other middle-class white women were faulted for wanting large families--criticized society and the media for glorifying "the New Woman" as opposed to the "child-bearing mother pushed unjustly to the background."

Scientific-progress, self-help, and relationship pieces in the first issue set the tone for future issues of the *Digest*. Other eventually-common article formats--such as the round-up department, the personality profile, and the human-interest filler--were introduced in the first issue as well. A front-of-the-book page, called "Remarkable Remarks" (p. 4), was a compilation of inspirational quotes and the forerunner of the *Digest*'s popular, continuing feature, "Points to Ponder." A five-paragraph explanation of who Croesus was--as in the phrase, "rich as Croesus"--was the magazine's first filler (p. 18). If Croesus was an interesting historical figure in the 1920s, the subject of the *Digest*'s first personality profile was perhaps the greatest living symbol of the decade: Henry Ford. That piece (pp. 21-22) was less a biography of Ford than a compendium of his views on politics and business--from railroad owners (greedy and self-serving) to the future of agriculture (dim).[35]

The first issue of *The Reader's Digest* closed with a subscription form--the rate was $3 a year[36]--and a plea to readers that they pass the form along to friends, who "will be delighted to learn of this unique publication [and] will appreciate your kindness in bringing it to their attention" (p. 63). Readers evidently complied, because during its first seven years, when the magazine was sold only by subscription, its circulation rose steadily. In 1926 it reached 20,000.[37] By then the Wallaces had moved the operation to a New York suburb appropriately called Pleasantville--as John Heidenry describes it, "a storybook version of the American small town"--and hired a business manager and another editor.[38]

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[35] DeWitt Wallace's admiration for Henry Ford is clear from the tone of this article; so is his approval of Ford's corporate paternalsim, a management style Wallace would imitate when building his own "company town" in Pleasantville, N. Y.

[36] This $3 annual subscription price did not rise for more than 30 years (Wood, 224).

The *Digest*'s Legacy: A Wider View of the Twentieth Century

While the early *Digest*'s comments about immigrants, African Americans, and non-traditional women provide plenty of material for modern-day criticism, its editorial stance on these cultural outsiders was most likely a reflection--a fairly comprehensive one--of the political and social climate of the day, as discussed earlier in this paper. This reflection is, in itself, an interesting body of evidence for historical analysis. Nevertheless, with regard to its nativism, racism, and sexism, the new magazine was probably more of a follower than a leader in the 1920s.[39]

The new publication *was* unusual, however, in its standardized format, its editorial mix, and its efficiently compact size. And, appearing after a decade culturally characterized by intellectualism and grim realism, the *Digest* was a media pioneer in its straightforward prose and its optimistic editorial voice.

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[37] This growth occurred despite the fact that during the twenties, Wallace sent subscription solicitations only to people living more than 500 miles outside New York. The reason for this was that he was paying nothing for his articles, all reprints from other media, and he was afraid other publishers would find out what was in the magazine! By the 1930s, he lifted this restriction after he began paying for reprints as well as commissioning "originals," articles prepared specifically for the *Digest* (Heidenry 63, 65; Bainbridge, 54).

[38] Heidenry, 55-65.

[39] Its continuing conservative editorial bias through more liberal eras may also be a reflection of a strong conservative element in the American population no matter what the prevailing climate. Or it may have to do with the longevity of the Wallaces (DeWitt died in 1981, Lila in 1984), who remained politically conservative and maintained control of editorial decisions into their nineties.

These qualities were the chief targets of criticism of the *Digest* during the 1920s, just as they still are today. Detractors have argued, then and now, that in its reduction of information and ideas, in its simplification of major issues, the magazine was/is shallow, and insulting to the American reading public. Those who have levelled such charges at "the little magazine" would most likely concur with Willa Cather's 1922 assertion that mass-produced literature "manufactured to entertain great multitudes of people must be considered exactly like a cheap soap or a cheap perfume."[40]

Yet other critics have viewed the *Digest* of the 1920s, and its legacy, in a different light. Historian Ann Douglas notes that not only the *Digest*, but also *The New Yorker* (founded in 1925) "disliked what Edmund Wilson rebuked in 1927 as the 'development of language beyond its theme'; both relied on spoken and speakable language."[41] Literary scholar Earl Rovit includes these two titles as well as *Time* (the third major, lasting American magazine begun in the 1920s) in his argument that straightforward and concise editorial matter was a response to a real, not manufactured, desire of American readers of the era.

Rovit believes that the three magazines offered readers not conformity but consistency, a reassuring quality in a world of increasing turmoil. Each one provided "a collective voice that would be instantly recognizable, consistent from issue to issue, and intimately associated with an imprint of automatic reliability." Comparing this reassurance to the "bleak despair" of the decade's' "lost generation"--expressed in the works of, among others, Eliot, Fitzergerald, Hemingway, and Faulkner--Rovit speculates that these magazines symbolized Americans' desire during an era of moral confusion for "Truth (*Time*), Goodness (*Reader's Digest*), and Beauty (*New Yorker*)."[42]

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[40] Willa Cather, "The Novel Démeublé, *Not Under Forty* (1922; Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), 44.

[41] Ann Douglas, *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1995), 69.

Yet clearly the formulaic *Reader's Digest* has met the needs of more than that one generation. While the turmoil of the 1920s gave way to very different social, political, and cultural climates in later decades, the *Digest*'s popularity continued unabated. Today, the magazine's total U. S. circulation is more than 15 million.[43] Its very name has become a part of the American vocabulary: someone who doesn't want to listen to a long explanation says, "Just give me the *Reader's Digest* version" (meaning, "Just give me a short version with the key points"--an accurate summation of DeWitt Wallace's business philosophy).

This success has influenced dozens if not hundreds of American magazines that were founded after the 1920s, as well as some that were in existence even before the *Digest* was born. Editorial devices widely popularized by the *Digest*--the list format, the expert byline, the human-interest filler, the self-improvement piece, the round-up of inspirational or humorous quotes--are standard fare in modern American consumer magazines. So is the medium's preference for what

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[42] Earl Rovit, "Modernism and Three Magazines: An Editorial Revolution," *The Sewanee Review* 93 (1985): 540-53.

[43] Audit Bureau of Circulation, "Magazine Publisher's Statement: *Reader's Digest*," June 30, 1995.

DeWitt Wallace called "constructiveness" in articles, the editorial message that, no matter what the problem, an answer can be found--a philosophy that was an essential part of the upbeat original *Digest*. What's more, since 1938, the magazine has been one of America's most successful cultural exports; today it is published in 18 languages and reaches 14 million readers in 46 foreign countries.[44] "Except for the Scriptures," a media historian once noted, "nothing ever published has been circulated more widely than the *Digest*."[45]

A reading of any recent issue alongside the February 1922 premier issue confirms what journalism scholars Ron Smith and Linda Decker-Amos discovered in their 1985 content analysis of the magazine: that there is "validity to the notion [that] the *Digest* is unchanging."[46] A small but more recent sampling, the last four issues of 1995 (September through December), bears out this consistency.

Though there are more "original articles" in the current *Digest*, reprints still fill about half of each issue. The magazine's length has quadrupled since 1922 and individual articles now run an average of four to six pages,[47] but they are still about a fourth of the size of features in other magazines. Including the regular columns, there is a consistent number of articles per month--either 37 or 38, in the 1995 issues. While true-life dramas have been added to the magazine's regular editorial mix, otherwise it is very much the same in 1995 as it was in 1922: an assortment of self-help pieces, personality profiles, round-up departments, reports on scientific progress, stories about nature and pets, relationship pieces, and advice from experts. The front cover is still relatively free of artwork, featuring, instead, the table of contents page.[48]

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[44] "*Reader's Digest* Global Fact Sheet" (Pleasantville, N. Y.: The Reader's Digest Association, Inc., 1995).

[45] Bainbridge, 1.

[46] Ron F. Smith and Linda Decker-Amos, "Of Lasting Interest? A Study of Change in the Content of *The Reader's Digest*," *Journalism Quarterly* 62 (1985): 131.

[47] A book condensation--that is, a *whole book*, condensed--can total 20 to 25 pages.

The social and cultural phenomena that made the *Digest* a welcome new idea in 1922--the forces of urbanization, mass production, information explosion, and the busyness of daily life--are still with us in 1996. To a great extent, the conservative social forces that created a market for the *Digest*'s conservative tone and viewpoints in the twenties are also still with us. The reassuring consistency, the sameness of style and content from issue to issue, that made this publication popular in its first decade continues to earn readers' loyalty in its eighth decade. One history of the *Digest* maintains that Americans are so drawn to the magazine because

> It prefers the positive, likes the sunlighted picture best. It is directed to the same characteristics in the reader that it displays itself: the curiosity, the humor, the love of adventure, the affection for the familiar, the desire to understand, the indignation at what hurts, the wish that things were better, and the belief that they can be.[49]

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[48] Only rarely has the *Digest* used significant cover art, as do almost all other mass-market national magazines. A notable exception was the July 1942 cover, which, along with the covers of dozens of other national magazines that month--the first July after the U. S.'s entry into World War II--featured the American flag (Janello, 26). During the late 1950s, the *Digest* briefly experimented with putting the table of contents on the back cover and an attractive photograph, generally unrelated to any article inside the issue, on the front; the magazine had previously--and has since--run photos or illustrations on its back cover (Wood, 161).

[49] Wood, 269-70.

While sentimental, this description was most likely true of what many Americans in 1922 hoped for (despite the realities around them) and is equally true of how many Americans today like to think of ourselves (despite the realities around us).

Conclusion

This paper has argued that the 1922 debut issue of *The Reader's Digest* was a product of its time and place--a moment of great social, political, and commercial change in America. Yet if one accepts the notion that a journalistic medium is shaped by its historical setting, then the lasting popularity of a particular editorial formula is equally telling about U. S. culture over a larger time span.

The fact that this seemingly historically-situated magazine has thrived for 74 years suggests that the decades of the American twentieth century may be culturally more similar than different, and that perhaps historical "eras" (and their media) are not as clearly bounded as we may think. Such a possibility underscores the relevance of historical scholarship to the study of present-day media.

The wider view of the *Digest*'s history is a paradoxical one: A publication characterized by simplification and optimism is the most successful magazine of a century often characterized by complexity and anxiety. The questions this paradox raises--about American media and American audiences--are of as much enduring interest as the medium itself.

News Magazine Lead Story Coverage of the 1992 Presidential Campaign

by

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News Magazine Lead Story Coverage of the 1992 Presidential Campaign

Stung by media critics over the past two decades about presidential campaign coverage which had been documented to be shallow and negative,[1] media editors and reporters, along with political scientists, carried on discussions about how to improve election coverage before the 1992 presidential campaign began.[2] For awhile editors succeeded in carrying out their resolve to publish more issue-oriented campaign news in the early part of the election. It was an campaign in which no one had given Bill Clinton much of a chance in to win the nomination, let alone the election. It was a three-person race, as Ross Perot decided to run, drop out, and then reenter for a month-long stretch run. It was an election with three contrasting personalities--a political reporter's dream.

Journalists who covered the candidates reported they had lived through an interesting campaign and some even labeled the campaign a "real watershed" in American politics.[3] By the time the election was over, however, media performance had reverted back to the shallow and negative coverage which had been the pattern in campaign coverage over the past three decades. Political scientist Thomas Patterson said the media's good intentions ended when the Gennifer Flowers story entered the public's consciousness in January of 1992.[4] By July, media concentration on character issues and the private lives of candidates was billed as "sleaze journalism" by some media critics. After the campaign was over, *Washington Post* press critic Howard Kurtz said:

> In the end, a campaign that frequently managed to bring out the worst in the news business ended on a hopeful note. Despite the distractions, both newspapers and television had managed for two solid months to elevate the level of discourse, listen to the voters and avoid the quicksand of sleaze and scandal.[5]

This study seeks to test Kurtz's conclusion as it relates to news magazine coverage of the 1992 presidential campaign. Did the news magazines join their print and electronic brethren in elevating their post-convention coverage of the presidential candidates, or was it business as usual? Results of this directional content analysis will be compared with a similar study of news magazine coverage of the 1988 presidential election conducted by the investigators.[6]

Research conducted on the 1992 election by communications scholars does not echo the sentiments of working journalists about their performance, nor does it include much analysis of news magazine coverage. King, for example, content analyzed the *New York Times, Washington Post,* and the *Los Angeles Times* for their assessments of the integrity and competence of the three 1992 presidential candidates during the post-convention period. She found approximately half of the statements in campaign news and op/ed pages were concerned with candidate character, and the majority of explicit statements in those two contexts were negative in tone and theme.[7] Lowry and Shidler analyzed television news sound bites during the post-convention period and found that approximately half of the sound bites aired by the networks were bites from noncandidates. Their analysis revealed that the Bush and Clinton sound bites aired by the networks were similar in number and length of time. However, when noncandidate sound bites were factored in, republican candidates received three times as many negative bites as independent candidates and two times as many negative bites as democratic candidates.[8] Moriarty and Popovich analyzed presidential campaign photos in the three news magazines during the post-convention period. They found that Clinton received a larger number of photos than did Bush and Perot, but news magazine gave strikingly similar play to all three candidates.[9] Miller and Denham examined the *Los Angeles Times, The New York Times,* and *Washington Post* stories for horserace, image and policy terms during the 1988 and 1992 campaign periods--pre-convention, convention, and post-convention. They found that while the media had good intentions to avoid horserace coverage in 1992, the number of horserace terms increased as the campaign wore on.[10] Patterson analyzed 4263 *Time* and *Newsweek* paragraphs from 1960-1992 and found that reporter evaluative references to Clinton and Bush, sans horserace references, had dropped to 40 percent positive compared to 75 percent positive during the Kennedy-Nixon election in 1960.[11] Hollander examined the "new news" phenomenon which occurred during the 1992 election, and which had been successfully used by all three candidates. He wanted to see if there was a real difference between actual campaign knowledge and perceived campaign knowledge in viewing audiences that watched MTV, talk shows, or late shows. He found that viewers had more actual knowledge of campaigns if they watched talk shows, rather than MTV or late shows, but only if they had a higher education level.[12]

In studies concerned with the 1988 presidential campaign, Stempel and Windhauser found that in terms of column inches, presidential campaign coverage in 14 U.S. prestige newspapers was evenly divided, although eight of the 14 newspapers gave a slight edge in news coverage to Republicans. They concluded that there was little relationship between editorial endorsements and news coverage.[13] Popovich, Moriarty and Pitts found that the lead stories in *Time, U.S. News & World Report,* and *Newsweek* gave neutral coverage to issues, party and campaign topics, but overall were negative toward the candidates. The majority of statements presented by the writers were concerned with horserace issues.[14] King analyzed campaign themes in weekday front-page stories from January to June in the *New York Times* and *USA Today,* and she found that horserace issues clearly dominated front page coverage. Both papers gave slightly more front-page coverage to Democrats.[15] Hershey found that two-thirds of the coverage in *The New York Times* and the *Indianapolis Star* was devoted to campaign strategy.[16] Johnson analyzed 1988 presidential primary coverage in newspapers and television and found differences in how both mediums covered horserace issues, which he attributed to structural differences between the two media. He found that the press' coverage of the horserace changed as the campaign progressed, and these changes produced different perceptions of how candidates were succeeding during the campaign.[17] In a second study devoted to newspaper and television coverage of the 1988 democratic primaries, Johnson found that the press covers campaigned differently when no front-runner had been determined. He concluded that campaign performance by candidates influenced the amount and tone of coverage a candidate received, and conversely, amount and tone of coverage influenced candidate performance.[18] Kenney and Simpson found evidence that ownership and financing had some influence on the coverage of 1988 presidential campaign in the Washington *Post* and the *Washington Times.* [19] Two investigators studied campaign visuals in the three newsmagazines and found that Republican candidates were pictured more often than Democrats. Bush photos were significantly larger than those for Dukakis, and a more positive presentation of Bush photos occurred during the post-convention campaign period--Labor Day to Election Day.[20]

In evaluating elections prior to 1988, investigators have examined the amounts of coverage devoted to various candidates and parties, the kinds of topics the press covers during various campaigns, the incumbency factor, questions of objectivity and bias in various facets of the media, and the role the press plays during political campaigns in setting the agenda for its readers.[21]

Research Questions

Similar to the study of news magazines and the 1988 presidential campaign mentioned above, this study used a directional content analysis to determine how *Time, U.S. News & World Report* and *Newsweek* covered the 1992 post-convention presidential campaign. The specific research questions which guided this research were:

1. What percentage of the news magazines' coverage was contributed by presidential candidates, the news magazines or other news sources?
2. What was the direction of news magazine coverage concerning candidates in the 1992 campaign?
3. What 1992 campaign topics were covered by the news magazines?

Method

Each lead campaign story which appeared in the three news magazines during the 1992 post-convention campaign period--Labor Day to Election Day--was the focus of this research. Altogether the 33 lead stories--ll for each magazine--produced 3372 sentences. *Newsweek* stories accounted for 1054 sentences: *Time*, 1171; and *U.S. News & World Report*, 1147.

The research methodology used was a directional content analysis.[22] A directional content analysis allows researchers the opportunity to examine whether the press is leaning toward one candidate or the other, and whether that orientation is positive, negative, or neutral, as in the case of this study. The value of directional analysis is that it adds another dimension beyond the sheer quantity of sentences or paragraphs devoted to one candidate or another, or one party or another. In short, while the column inches devoted to candidates may be equal in a particular magazine, the fact that a magazine may actually be leaning more toward one candidate than another in its coverage would go unnoticed. Such was the case in this study where Bill Clinton received twice the number of sentences in the three news magazines then did the other two candidates. The large number of sentences, however, did not have any bearing on the direction of the coverage given to Clinton.

A coding sheet was designed for use with each story evaluated. Every sentence in the articles was coded in four ways: News source, object, topic and evaluation. The news source options were the three candidates: Bill Clinton, George Bush and Ross Perot; their vice presidential candidates, and their spouses. Because of the media attention given to the relationship between Bill and Hillary Clinton, investigators decided to evaluate on the coding sheet how the news magazines dealt with the "Hillary Factor." However, since the study dealt only with lead stories in the news magazines, investigators did not expect spouses to attract much coverage in the lead stories.

Other news source options included the newsmagazine itself, newspapers, television, and a category for "mixed media" when the news magazine writers were talking about media in a generic way. An "other" news source designation was also included for those sources who did not fall into the previous options. Candidates were credited as a source for every direct quote made by them or for any paraphrase of a candidate's words made by the newsmagazine. The newsmagazine was credited as a source when the sentence appeared to be a fact or evaluation by the newsmagazine. In cases where more than one candidate was mentioned in a sentence, the sentence was coded for each candidate. The "other" source was credited when the magazine presented a direct quote or a paraphrase attributed to a source other than one of the campaign candidates (e.g., a campaign spokesperson).

"Objects" were recorded when one of the news sources mentioned an opponent, an issue, the campaign, or the party. This coding strategy was employed after reading the articles in the newsmagazines before coding began. Investigators found that news sources usually talked about someone or some issue in most sentences. This method presented coders with the following options for the coding sheet:

-candidate says about issues
-candidate says about opponent
-candidate says about self
-candidate says about the campaign
-candidate says about spouse
-magazine says about candidate
-magazine says about issue
-magazine says about campaign
-magazine says about party
-magazine says about spouse
-other (fits into none of these categories)

For the evaluation each sentence was coded as either positive (+), negative (-), or neutral (0). Using definitions discussed in Budd, Thorp, and Donohew[23] a positive sign was given to a sentence when news source statements put the candidate, party, or campaign in a favorable light, or showed that the news source agreed with the issue on which he was speaking. Sentences which portrayed news sources as strong, organized, focused, relaxed, etc. were considered favorable. A negative sign was given for news source statements that put the candidate, party, or campaign in an unfavorable light, or showed that the news source disagreed with the issue about which he was speaking. Sentences which portrayed news sources as weak, disorganized, confused, unfocused, tense, etc., were considered unfavorable. A neutral sign was given for statements which were neither favorable nor unfavorable. Such statements were often statements of fact and/or provided background to the issue in question.

The topic categories identified the most important issues of the 1992 campaign and each sentence was coded for one of the topics. Topics were created from another study of 1988 campaign coverage in *The New York Times.* [24] Campaign topics (what previous investigators had termed as "horserace issues") were included with the following categories: (1) abortion, (2) campaign, (3) domestic, (4) education, (5) environment, (6) farm, (7) foreign policy, (8) labor, (9) economic, (10) national defense, (11) nuclear defense, (12) patriotism, (13) gender issues, and (14) miscellaneous.

Initially, coding for this study was carried out by a graduate student, who coded all 3372 sentences. In order to test the reliability of the coding process, an independent coder, who was another graduate student, was asked to code randomly chosen major political stories from all three newsmagazines. Overall, the independent coder evaluated 13 percent of the sentences originally coded, which required 1700 coding decisions. Coder reliability was .89, which was determined by the use of Holsti's coefficient of reliability.[25]

Findings

Overall, the three news magazines devoted 3372 sentences to the 1992 presidential campaign in the 33 lead stories evaluated during the post-convention period (Labor Day to Election Day). Newsweek contributed 1054 statements to that total; Time, 1171; and U.S. News, 1147. The first research question was concerned with the number of statements which were actually provided by the candidates, the news magazines, and others. Table 1 provides the answer.

TABLE 1

Percentages of Statement Attribution Contributed by Candidates, News Magazines and Other Sources in Three News magazines

Category	Newsweek (n=1054)	Time (n=1171)	U.S. News (n=1147)	Totals (n=3372)
Candidates	3%	9%	2%	5%
News Magazines	86	76	90	83
Other Sources	11	15	8	11

News magazine writers accounted for 83 percent (2832) of the 3372 statements made about the presidential campaign. Candidates were either quoted or paraphrased in only 5 percent (166) of the sentences. Other sources, either other media or other campaign spokespersons, accounted for 11 percent (374) of the statements. These figures are similar to what investigators found in the 1988 study, and they vary only a percent in all three cases. This is not surprising since previous investigators have determined that magazines consistently provide more interpretive than descriptive articles during election campaigns.

Of the 2832 sentences provided by the news magazines, presidential candidates were mentioned in 1633 sentences (48%) of the 3372 total. *Newsweek* contributed 588 sentences to that total, *Time,* 500; and *U.S. News,* 545. What direction the news magazines took concerning the 1992 presidential candidates--the second research question--can be found in Table 2.

Newsweek magazine's coverage of the 1992 presidential candidates in its lead stories was not the same for all three candidates. *Newsweek* mentions of Clinton were more neutral than positive or negative. Clinton statements were twice as neutral (45%) than either Bush's (15%) or Perot's (19%). Bush received the highest number of negative statements (70%) from *Newsweek* than did Clinton (27%) or Perot (35%). It is clear from these findings that Bush received a higher percentage of negative coverage from *Newsweek* than he did from the other two news magazines. Perot, however, received his most

TABLE 2

Percentages of Positive, Negative and Neutral Coverage Found in Three News Magazines Devoted to 1992 Presidential Candidates

NEWSWEEK (n=588)*	Positive	Negative	Neutral
Clinton (n=289)	28%	27%	45%
Bush (n=144)	15	70	15
Perot (n=155)	46	35	19
*(X^2 = 60.3, df=4, p< .001)			
TIME (n=500)*			
Clinton (n=239)	32	33	35
Bush (n=127)	21	54	24
Perot (n=134)	26	39	35
*(X^2 = 10.4, df=4, p< .05)			
U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT (n=545)*			
Clinton (n=287)	19	35	46
Bush (n=202)	14	50	36
Perot (n=56)	32	32	36
*(X^2 = 14.3, df=4, p< .01)			
TOTAL COVERAGE (n=1633)*			
Clinton (n=815)	26	32	42
Bush (n=473)	17	58	25
Perot (n=345)	35	35	30
*(X^2 = 20.6, df=4, p< .001)			

positive coverage from *Newsweek* (46%), while Clinton received 28% positive coverage and Bush, 15%. Coverage of the three candidates in *Newsweek* was significantly different (X^2 = 60.3, df = 4, p< .001), and that significance was contributed by the high percentage of neutral statements Clinton received and the high percentage of negative statements which Bush received.

Coverage of the three candidates in *Time* magazine was also significantly different (X^2 = 10.4, df = 4, p< .05). Clinton coverage was more balanced in *Time* than it was in either of the two other news magazines. Clinton percentages for positive, negative and neutral coverage were within two percent of each other as Table 2 shows. Bush negative statements (54%) were twice as high as his positive (21%) and neutral statements (24%). Perot received his highest percentage of negative statements (39%) from *Time*, which was the only news magazine which tended to be negative about his candidacy.

U.S. News coverage of the three candidates provided the largest percentage of neutral statements among the news magazines. All three candidates received their highest percentage of neutral statements from *U.S. News* --Clinton, 46%; Bush, 36%; and Perot, 36%. *U.S. News* provided Clinton with his highest percentage of negative statements (35%), and Bush with this lowest number of negative statements (50%). But Bush also received his lowest percentage of positive statements (14%) from the magazine. This is a surprising reversal for *U.S. News* from the 1988 election. In that election Bush received 38% positive statements, 27% negative statements, and 35% neutral statements. Why the turn around can probably be explained by how *U.S. News* writers perceived Perot. Perot received the most balanced coverage of the three candidates from *U.S. News,* and it was the most balanced coverage he received from the three news magazines. Coverage of the three candidates in *U.S. News* was significantly different ($X^2 = 14.3$, df = 4, $p< .01$).

In looking at the total coverage given to the 1992 presidential candidates by the three news magazines in their lead stories, a pattern of coverage is evident. The three newsmagazines, overall, provided 26% positive coverage to the candidates, 42% negative coverage, and 32% neutral coverage. In the one month post-convention period in which Perot reentered the presidential race, the news magazines provided him with balanced coverage. Bush coverage was decidedly negative (58%) in tone in all three of the news magazines. Clinton coverage, while not strongly positive (26%) was less negative (32%) than the coverage given to Bush (58%) and Perot (35%). Clinton coverage was largely more neutral (42%) than either Bush's (25%) or Perot's (30%). The differences in coverage by the three news magazines was significant ($X^2 = 20.6$, df = 4, $p< .001$). The significance was largely contributed by the amount of negative statements which Bush received in *Newsweek, Time,* and *U.S. News.*

Vice presidential coverage in the news magazines' lead stories was too small to analyze. Overall, the presidential running mates received only 53 statements. However, Quayle and Gore were featured in one article in *Time* around the time of their debate, but the story was not the lead story for the issue.

Hillary Clinton, however, actually received more coverage than all of the vice presidential candidates combined. She accounted for 79 of the 122 statements which the news magazines gave to spouses in lead stories. She received 29 positive statements, 25 negative, and 25 neutral statements. The bulk of her coverage, as it was for all the spouses, came from *Time* magazine--60 statements. Time pictured Mrs. Clinton on the cover of one of its issues during the post-convention period, and she was the focus of the lead story in that same issue, which also included a look at Mrs. Bush and Mrs. Quayle. Both *Time* and *U.S. News* coverage of spouses was limited in their lead stories. *Newsweek* devoted only seven statements to spouses and all of them pertained to Mrs. Clinton. Mrs. Clinton was featured, however, in each magazine's kickoff story concerning the new administration of Mr. Clinton. These stories appeared in the last news magazine of the sample evaluated in this study.

The third research question dealt with percentage of coverage given to campaign topics by the three news magazines. As in 1988, the coverage of topics was significantly similar among the three news magazines (See Table 3).

TABLE 3

Percentages of Campaign Coverage (and Top Five Ranks) Devoted to 13 Topics in Three News Magazines.

TOPICS*	Newsweek	Time	U.S. News	Ave.
Campaign	71.2%(1)	72.8%(1)	56.5%(1)	66.8%
Economics	23.2 (2)	8.9 (2)	15.1 (2)	15.7
Domestic	4.1 (3)	2.7 (3)	5.9 (3)	4.2
Foreign Policy	0.5 (4)	0.8 (4)	5.2 (4)	2.2
Gender issues	0.0	0.7 (5)	3.2 (5)	1.3
National Defense	0.1	0.0	2.4	0.8
Education	0.5 (4)	0.6	0.4	0.5
Abortion	0.0	0.3	1.3	0.5
Patriotism	0.0	0.2	0.3	0.2
Environment	0.0	0.3	0.1	0.1
Labor	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.1
Nuclear Defense	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Farm	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Miscellaneous	0.5	12.6	9.6	7.5

*Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance (W) was used to determine the association between sets of ranks. When N rankings exceed 7, significance is found by computing X^2. W = .82, X^2 (df=12, n=39) = 29.52, p< .05.[26]

Topic coverage by the three news magazines was overwhelmingly (67%) centered around campaign, or horserace, issues. All three news magazines continued to focus on the hoopla, campaign strategy, and party politics. Although this finding is consistent with previous research, 1992 topics covered by the news magazines differ somewhat from 1988 campaign topics. In 1992, coverage was actually more similar among the news magazines. The top four topics--campaign issues, economics, domestic policies, and foreign policy--were ranked similarly by all three news magazines. The second topic--economics--did not fare the same way in 1988. News magazines gave approximately 16% coverage to economics in 1992, while it was only covered about seven percent of the time in 1988. The fact that economics coverage would double in news magazines in 1992 would come as no surprise to Kurtz, who said that the whole campaign came down to one inscription on the wall at Clinton headquarters, "The economy, stupid."[27] This finding would also suggest that like their print and electronic brethren, news magazines did make an attempt to provide their readers with better issue coverage in their lead stories. This fact is also borne out by a drop of approximately three percent in campaign issues from 1988 to 1992.

Gender issues received more than lip service by *Time* and *U.S. News* in the 1992 election. This issue appeared in the fifth spot in the rankings of both magazines. *Newsweek's* fifth spot was split between foreign policy and education. This is consistent with the 1988 campaign because both *Time* and *U.S. News* mentioned gender issues in their lead campaign stories. *Newsweek* coverage of gender issues was nonexistent in its lead stories. The elevated position of gender issues in the 1992 campaign was in some ways the result of media attention to Hillary Clinton's prospective role in the White House, and the issue of gays in the military, which surfaced in full bloom right after President Clinton entered the White House.

Discussion

In the 1992 presidential campaign, journalists made a conscious effort to improve their coverage of campaign issues and the candidates. Previous research had shown that media presidential campaign coverage had been shallow and negative. By and large, print and electronic journalists did succeed somewhat in changing their attitudes and techniques concerning coverage of the 1992 presidential campaign.[28] There were some definite high points (coming early in the primary season and then in the post-convention period) in media coverage of the campaign and some definite low points (consider the Flowers fiasco, e.g.). How this discussion may have affected news magazine coverage of the post-convention president campaign was the focus of this study.

For the most part, however, it was business as usual for news magazine journalists. They continued to dominate their lead story coverage with their own opinions and evaluations. Results of this study showed that 83% of the statements generated in their lead stories about the campaign resulted from news magazine writers themselves. Forty-two percents of the statements made about the candidates were negative statements, and only 26% of their statements were positive. A third were neutral. This set of circumstances was particularly troublesome to Patterson who felt that the media made it difficult for presidential candidates to communicate with the American public.[29] As a result, the media has lost its own credibility with the public because the public finds only shallowness and negativity in the traditional press. This irony did not escape a Freedom Forum panel of media experts who concluded:

> . . . much of the public's attitude throughout the campaign seemed to be that the press not only couldn't be trusted to deliver untarnished political news, but had become irrelevant to the process once new, less filtered avenues for political information became available.[30]

This is a lose-lose situation for all combined. The American public loses valuable information from their traditional news sources, the media is faced with a loss of credibility which eventually affects their bottom line, and presidential candidates must work harder to find more effective ways--like the new news--to get their messages to the public.

Incumbent George Bush was clearly the loser in the 1992 presidential campaign in the three news magazines. His coverage was 58% negative, and one magazine, *U.S. News,* made a complete turnaround in its coverage of the incumbent president. In 1988, *U.S. News* coverage was judged more positive than negative of Vice President Bush, but in 1992 the magazine was critical of his ability to lead the country for another four years. After the election, *U.S. News* Editor-at-Large David Gergen said that media coverage toward Bush was tilted against him. Why?

> A more likely explanation is that many in the press simply tired of Bush, wanted a fresh story and down deep shared the same disappointments in Bush that voters had expressed. Also, in age and outlook, many in the press are much closer to Clinton than to Bush. Whatever the reason, the press leaned toward the Democratic challenger.[31]

What stunned reporters was that Clinton, the Washington-outsider, won the election after the criticism he endured from Republican candidates, and the media, too. News magazine coverage, although negative in a third of the statements about him, was actually more neutral (42%) than positive or negative in reporting Clinton's activities. Was it his popularity with the American public which the news magazines sensed or was he just the recipient of an electoral gift from the American public which was tired after 12 years of Republican presidents? Campaign reporter Kurtz says:

> The American people had been telling us all year that they were ready to hand George Bush his walking papers, and for all of his desperate attempts to blacken Clinton's character, Bush never got above 38 percent in the polls. The desire for change was so strong that Ross Perot pulled an impressive 19 percent of the vote, confounding the pundits once again.[32]

U.S. News gave Ross Perot the most balanced coverage of the three news magazines. Perot's month-long candidacy received the closest thing to balanced coverage among all the candidates in all three news magazines, and some journalists covering the campaign were outspoken about his influence. Seymour Topping of *The New York Times* summarized:

> In every sense, Ross Perot spiced up this campaign for the press. He brought certain issues more to the forefront. He impelled the Republican and Democratic parties to more innovative approaches to their campaigns. He communicated very clearly to the two parties the impatience of the electorate with old-style politickin' and the inability of Washington to get things done.[33]

In the 1992 campaign, who would symbolize Washington more than George Bush? Patterson says the public laid the blame for the nation's weak economy squarely on George Bush's shoulders.[34] Clearly, the reentry of Perot into the presidential race was a major distraction to Bush's campaign efforts.

It is evident here that news magazines continued to spend a great deal of time on campaign issues rather than on policy issues during the 1992 post-convention campaign period. Although this study found a decline of three percent in campaign, or horserace, issues, approximately 67% of the coverage was devoted to such issues. The growth of economic coverage in the 1992 campaign was evident. Economic coverage in 1992 was twice as large as it was in 1988. Gender issues became a "real" issue in the 1992 presidential campaign. The inclusion of Hillary Clinton into news magazine coverage elevated the role of the First Lady in presidential campaign politics. Because of her access to the president, her working relationship with him, and the fact that she would be the first First Lady to go into the White House with her own career, news magazines, and all media, found it awkward not to include her in their presidential campaign coverage. Her sheer presence may have turned the spotlight on all the spouses of the presidential and vice presidential candidates in the 1992 presidential campaign.

Finally, when total news magazine coverage was evaluated concerning the 1992 presidential election candidates, it remained obvious that news magazines continued the media tradition of writing negatively about the candidates. In this study of lead stories, 42% of the statements about the candidates were negative. In past studies, investigators have argued that the media does a disservice to the public in campaign periods when it portrays candidates so negatively. Rather than provide valuable information to the general public, the media covers issues that are not relevant to the American public. Patterson explains the ramifications of such behavior:

> There is danger to democracy in both the unrelenting negativism of the press and the increased ability of candidates to avoid the press's scrutiny. These tendencies are related, the first fosters the second. And neither is healthy.[35]

The American public has already recognized unhealthy tendencies in the traditional media and the public has have been handed a new solution for obtaining political information--the new news. That is the legacy of the 1992 campaign for the news magazines.

NOTES

[1] See for example: Doris A. Graber,*Mass Media and American Politics* . 2nd. ed., (Washington: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1984); Marjorie Randon Hershey, "The Campaign and the Media," in *The Election of 1988* , ed. Gerald M. Pomper (New Jersey: Chatham House Publishers, Inc. 1989); Thomas E. Patterson,*The Mass Media Election: How Americans Choose Their President* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1980); Bruce H. Westley, Charles E. Higbie, Timothy Burke, David J. Lippert, Leonard Maurer and Vernon A. Stone, "The News Magazines and the 1960 Conventions," *Journalism Quarterly,* 40 (1963): 525-531, 647.; Bill Winter, "The Press & the '88 Presidential Campaign," *Newspaper Research Journal,* 10 (1989): 1-10.

[2] Debra Gersh, "Superficial tv: Harvard report zaps television coverage of political campaigns; offers plan on how it can be improved," *Editor & Publisher,* 14 September 1991, 18.; Debra Gersh. Campaign coverage lessons for the media. *Editor & Publisher,* December 7, 1991, 12; Thomas Winship, "The New Curmudgeon: Retooling presidential election coverage," *Editor & Publisher,* 7 December 1991, 13.

[3] Debra Gersh, "Introspection: Journalists examine presidential coverage and the impact Ross Perot had on coverage," *Editor & Publisher,* 21 November 1992, 12-13.

[4] Thomas E. Patterson, *Out of Order* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994): 165-166.

[5] Howard Kurtz, *Media Circus: The Trouble with America's Newspapers* (New York: Random House, 1994): 293.

[6] Mark N. Popovich, Sandra E. Moriarty and Beverley J. Pitts, "News Magazine Coverage of the 1988 Presidential Campaign," *Mass Comm Review* 20 (1993): 99-110.

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[9] Sandra E. Moriarty and Mark N. Popovich, "News Magazine Visuals and the 1992 Presidential Election," paper presented to the Magazine Division at the 1993 Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication annual convention, Kansas City.

[10] M. Mark Miller and Bryan Denham, "Horserace, issue coverage in prestige newspapers during 1988, 1992 elections," *Newspaper Research Journal* 15 (Fall, 1994): 20-28.

[11] Patterson, 1994, p. 146.

[12] Barry A. Hollander, "The New News and the 1992 Presidential Campaign: Perceived vs. Actual Political Knowledge," *Journalism & Mass Communications Quarterly* 72 (Winter, 1995): 786-798.

[13] Guido H. Stempel, III and John Windhauser, "Coverage by the Prestige Press of the 1988 Presidential Campaign," *Journalism Quarterly* 66 (1989): 894-896, 919.

[14] Moriarty and Popovich, 1993.

[15] Erica G. King, "Thematic Coverage of the 1988 Presidential Primaries: A Comparison of USA Today and the New York Times," *Journalism Quarterly* 67 (1990): 83-89.

[16] Marjorie Randon Hershey, "The Campaign and the Media," in *The Election of 1988*, ed. Gerald M. Pomper (New Jersey: Chatham House Publishers, Inc., 1989).

[17] Thomas J. Johnson, "The Seven Dwarfs and Other Tales: How the Networks and Select Newspapers Covered the 1988 Democratic Primaries," *Journalism Quarterly* 70 (Summer, 1993): 311-320.

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[22] See Richard W. Budd, Robert W.Thorp and Lewis Donohew, *Content Analysis of Communications* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1974).

[23] Budd, Thorp, and Donohew, 1974.

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[26] Sidney Siegel, *Nonparametric Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1956): 229-239.

[27] Kurtz, 293.

[28] See Gersh, 21 November 1992., and Report of the Research Group, *The Finish Line: Covering the Campaign's Final Days* (New York: The Freedom Forum Media Studies Center, 1993).

[29] Patterson, 1994, 174.

[30] Research Group, "The Media Scoreboard, Final Round: Lessons of Campaign '92," *The Finish Line: Covering the Campaign's Final Days* (New York: The Freedom Forum Media Studies Center, 1993): 137.

[31] David Gergen, "Editorial: Was the Press Unfair to Bush?" *U.S. News & World Report,* 9 November 1992: 100.

[32] Kurtz, 292.

[33] Gersh, 21 November 1992, 13.

[34] Patterson, 1994, 169.

[35] Patterson, 1994, 172.

The Shrinking Debate over Journalistic Standards: Where Have all the Letters Gone?

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The Shrinking Debate over Journalistic Standards: Where Have all the Letters Gone?

Introduction

People hate journalism and journalists nowadays -- that's what many public opinion surveys assert, from Gallup to Harris to the Times Mirror Center for the People & The Press. And the reporting trade journals, such as Columbia Journalism Review (CJR) and American Journalism Review (AJR) are full of articles that discuss the animosity between readers and reporters. One recent CJR cover story suggested that many Americans regard modern journalists as "a generation of vipers."[1] A 1995 AJR article said journalists are "under siege" from angry consumers of news. The story quoted six news executives from across the country saying that many people in the United States are feeling "mistrustful, resentful, hostile, and angry" toward journalists. Andrew Kohut, director of the Times Mirror Center for the People & The Press, said in that article that many people believe the press hinders the country's efforts to solve its problems.[2] The mainstream press has reported much the same story. Atlantic Monthly, for instance, had a cover story in February explaining "Why Americans Hate The Media."[3]

This glut of articles about Americans' rampant dislike of the press might lead one to believe this anger would find its way into letters to the editors in today's magazines. And it would seem that if letters to the editor in popular magazines from the beginning of this century were compared to modern letters, there would be much more comment in this era about how the media need to get their ethical house in order. Surprisingly, however, the study presented in this paper, comparing modern letters to the editor published in 10 popular magazines with letters published in 10 magazines between 1902 and 1912, has discovered only a small number of letters about journalism, the news media, or journalistic standards printed from 1982 to 1992. Time magazine, for instance, published 11,892 letters to the editor from '82 to '92. But only 296 of those letters discussed the good and/or bad qualities of journalism. That means the subject of journalism was the focus of only 2.5 percent of all the published letters in Time from 1982 to 1992. In total this study found that while almost 42,000 letters to the editor were published in the 10 magazines examined from 1982 to 1992, only 1,481 letters -- roughly 3.5 percent -- discussed journalistic standards.

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[1] Paul Starobin, "A Generation of Vipers," Columbia Journalism Review, March/April 1995, 25.

[2] Linda Fibich, "Under Siege," American Journalism Review, September 1995, 16.

[3] James Fallows, "Why Americans Hate The Media," Atlantic Monthly, February 1996, 45-73.

In sharp contrast, a study of letters to the editor in 10 magazines published between 1902 and 1912 revealed a much higher percentage of readers' comments about journalistic standards were published then. Collier's magazines, for example, published 220 letters between 1902 and 1912 -- and 195 of those letters, or 89 percent, discussed journalism and what makes good and bad reporting. In total, 2,154 letters to the editor were published in the 10 magazines studied between 1902 and 1912. But 652 of those letters, or roughly 30 percent, debated journalistic standards.

For purposes of this research the term journalistic standards refers to such qualities as truthfulness, honesty, accuracy -- that is, concrete measurements of journalistic behavior that can be applied in determining what is ethical and what is not. Essentially this means this research sought out letters to the editor that discussed good and bad reporting.

The historical comparison presented here would suggest that readers had more of a connection with the magazines they read some 80 to 90 years ago than do current readers of magazines. Readers at the start of the century may have felt more compelled to commend the magazines when they did well and chastise them for poor behavior. What this shortage of comments about journalistic standards in modern letters to the editor ultimately means is open to many interpretations. But the view presented in this paper is that rather than public hatred for the media, the declining numbers of letters on journalistic topics may indicate indifference among today's magazine readers. Put simply, the low numbers of letters dealing with journalism might be interpreted as evidence that, in the words of Chicago Tribune writer Charles Madigan, "real people may be uncomfortable with news people because they don't view reality the same. Americans are almost eager to express their lack of interest in what the media cover . . Editors and readers seem to live in very different worlds."[4]

This research paper, based on preliminary findings gleaned from an ongoing study, compares the number of letters to the editor about journalistic standards contained in all the letters to the editor published in 10 popular magazines between 1982 and 1992 with those of 10 popular magazines published between 1902 to 1912. The modern magazines examined were: Atlantic, Forbes, Harper's, Life, The Nation, New Republic, Newsweek, The Progressive, Time and U.S. News and World Report. These currently published magazines were compared to magazines from the beginning of this century, most of which are now defunct, including Arena;[5] Collier's;[6] Cosmopolitan; Everybody's; Harper's

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[4] Charles M. Madigan "News Flash, Editors and Readers in Different Worlds," Dallas Morning News, 19 March, 1995, 10J.

[5] Arena magazine is included in this study based on journalism historian Louis Filler's assertion that it was "the most influential and radical of the muckraking journals." See

Weekly;[7] The Independent; The Ladies' Home Journal;[8] McClure's; Munsey's; and World's Work.[9] (Harper's Weekly eventually became Harper's and is still published in modern times, providing a direct comparison of the contents of its letters-to-the-editor pages. Today's Cosmopolitan is a totally different publication than the one from 1902. The Ladies Home Journal is obviously still published today, but no longer publishes letters to the editor.) The purpose of this study is to offer a historical perspective to current debates about media ethics, journalistic standards, and public discussion of the media. This study seeks to shed light on the ongoing conversation about journalism by magazines readers, and how that conversation may have changed over time. A central question that guided this study was whether discussion of journalistic standards in letters to the editor to popular magazines changed from the beginning of this century to the present time.

Journalism historian Hazel Dicken-Garcia says media ethics literature fails to deal with the issue of journalism standards with any sense of history. The mistaken impression left by this omission is that public debate over journalism ethics and standards only started recently, after Watergate, for example. More of the history of journalistic standards, she argues, remains to be uncovered and used "to inform, direct and give continuity" to current discussions of journalism ethics.[10] In addition, the voices of the audience regarding

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Louis Filler, The Muckrakers: Crusaders for American Liberalism (Yellow Springs, Ohio: Antioch Press, 1939), 40-41.

[6] Five of the magazines -- Collier's, Cosmopolitan, Everybody's, The Independent, and McClure's -- were studied because they were considered the premier muckraking publications, according to muckraking historians Louis Filler and Arthur and Lila Weinberg. See Filler, The Muckrakers, 41, and Arthur and Lila Weinberg, The Muckrakers (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1961), 139.

[7] Editors at Harper's Weekly and Munsey's were extremely critical of what they called muckraking's frantic sensationalism. The two magazines often ignored muckraking for years at a time, writes Will Irwin, in The Making of a Reporter (New York: G. P. Putnam's, 1942), 145-147; also Robert Underwood Johnson, Remembered Yesterday's (Boston: Little Brown, 1923), 87-88; and Louise Ware, Jacob A. Riis: Police Reporter, Reformer, and Useful Citizen (New York: Appleton Century Co., 1935), 49. Harper's and Munsey's are included in this study to provide a contrast with their aggressive muckraking magazine colleagues.

[8] The Ladies' Home Journal is included in this study because Filler admitted that this women's publication, which he described as "reactionary" and representative of the "solidly middle-class home," led one of the most widely renowned and successful muckraking battles -- the campaign for pure-food legislation. See Filler, The Muckrakers, 149.

[9] Filler described World's Work as "honest, sincere, and always one step behind the muckrakers." Filler, The Muckrakers, 165. It seems appropriate to include the magazine labelled the most behind the times in the muckraking movement in this analysis.

[10] Hazel Dicken-Garcia, Journalistic Standards in Nineteenth Century America (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 4.

journalism's standards has been almost entirely missing from the record. The research presented here seeks to recapture some of those voices by at least recording what some of those voices were discussing more frequently in 1902 and less often in 1992. This paper is not presented as a finished product, but as a work in progress -- one that hopes to raise questions and suggest some possible answers as to why people are writing far fewer letters to the editor about journalism in the recent decade than they did in the past.

Why Study Letters to the Editor?

Letters to the editor are a directly accessible voice of some readers. In seeking to understand magazine readers, this work responds to challenges from several magazine scholars, including journalism professor Mark Popovich. He and others have called for more study about magazine readers and their reaction to content. Popovich writes that although there is a growing body of research that "gives us some insight into the type of readers who seek out magazines. . ." there is little study of the "strength of the relationship readers may have with magazines. . . Without that kind of information we have a poor perspective on the role which magazines play in our society today."[11] Lee Jollife observes that there is a scarcity of research into audience reaction to magazine content. Jollife asserts that there is a need for studies that seek intellectual depth in understanding magazine audiences and "show the exchange of influences between the editor, the magazine text, the audience and society."[12]

Looking at letters to the editors in magazines and comparing the numbers from different points in time can be a first step toward the depth that Jollife and Popovich call for. Moreover, such a study can lead to understanding more about magazine readers and how they relate to different publications -- and how that relationship may have changed from the beginning to the end of this century. This research can provide crucial information needed to answer the question of whether readers in the periods 1902 to 1912 and 1982 to 1992 have felt involved with the magazines enough to discuss the journalistic pros and cons of coverage in letters to the editor. If readers believed they would be listened to when they expressed opinions about journalistic standards, it would logically follow that they would express such views and that at least some of these views would have been published.

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[11] Mark N. Popovich, "Research Review: Quantitative Magazine Studies, 1983-1993," in The American Magazine, Research Perspectives and Prospects ed. David Abrahamson (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1995), 32.

[12] Lee Joliffe, "Research Review: Magazine Editors and Editing Practices," The American Magazine,64.

Thus the numbers of those who wrote letters to the editor of the leading magazines between 1902 and 1912 and again between 1982 and 1992 are significant for several reasons. First, the letter writers were and remain a literate, opinionated, and highly visible portion of the population. True, we do not know if their views necessarily reflect general public opinion. Like searching for the holy grail, discovering general public opinion is difficult in the best of circumstances. Adding to the difficulty is that letters to the editor are sifted through the hands of gatekeepers/editors before publication. Editors have a great many letters to choose from, and thus it is a given that they are selective about what is ultimately published. Time magazine, for instance, publishes a letter to the readers each year, usually in February, in which it lists the total number of all letters to the editor it received during the previous year. The numbers vary from year to year, but Time's editors say they receive close to 50,000 letters to the editor annually. Each year the Time editors usually publish between 1,000 to 1,500 of those letters. The editors' annual letter to readers makes a point of stating that the editors publish a representative sampling of the letters and don't try to promote any particular agenda in the letters they print.[13] Other modern magazines may not receive as many letters. (U. S. News and World Report reported in a similar letter to readers in 1986 that it had received 36,000 letters from readers the year before and regularly gets that many letters each year.) But most magazines have just as much discretion in having a large pool of letters at their disposal and only a limited space to publish a representative sampling of the total. As a result, editors can, if they so desire, manipulate the readers' dialogue by choosing to print only certain letters.

But despite such limitations, letters to the editor can and do reflect some of the ideas of the population at large, especially those who are educated enough to feel comfortable expressing their views in writing. It can be argued that letters to the editor offer a significant view into a limited but influential world, for example, showing some of the topics that were on the agenda for discussion at a particular time.[14] Second, as mentioned earlier, the published letter writers' views are readily accessible. As journalism historian David Nord writes, letters to the editor provide a record of at least some of the ongoing conversation of a community.[15] These published letters are not a random sampling of reader response, they cannot tell what proportion of readers responded in what specific ways. But Nord describes letters to the editor as useful nonetheless because they reveal some readers speaking directly to - and often shouting at -- editors. Unlike other magazine readers, who remain silent, those who write letters to the editor at least leave a permanent and public account of their opinions of journalistic standards of the time.

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[13] For an example of such a letter to the reader, see Time, Feb. 20, 1989, 12. In that article Time says it received 51,000 letter in 1988.

[14] The question of whether letters to the editor reflect public opinion has been debated in a handful of articles. They include: H. Schuyler Foster, Jr., and Carl J. Friedrich, "Letters to the Editor as a Means of Measuring the Effectiveness of Propaganda," American Political Science Review 31 (April, 1937), 71-79; William D. Tarrant, "Who Writes Letters to the Editor?" Journalism Quarterly 34 (Fall, 1957), 501-502: David L. Grey and Trevor R. Brown, "Letters to the Editor: Hazy Reflections of Public Opinion," Journalism Quarterly 47 (Autumn, 1970), 450-56; Emmet Buell, Jr.,"Eccentrics or Gladiators, People Who Write About Politics in Letters to the Editor," Social Science Quarterly 56 (December, 1975), 440-49; Thomas J. Volgy, "Some of My Best Friends are Letter Writers: Eccentrics and Gladiators Revisited," Social Science Quarterly 58 (September, 1977); David B. Hill,

In further defense of examining letters to the editor, Nord writes that "the study of readers reading and responding to the news has several virtues. It casts light on the nature of journalism. How readers read and react to what they read suggests what the newspaper [and magazine] is. It also casts light on the nature of reading. . .The conversations between reader and editor provide a wonderful window on readers and reading. . . . They can tell us how some readers read, across a broad range of response. They can give us what we now need most in our efforts to construct a history of readership: a glimpse into the past of some actual readers reading their newspapers."[16] This paper examines readers reading magazines, not newspapers. But Nord would probably agree such a project is equally worthwhile.

The Research Methodology -- What was Done

As previously described, all letters to the editor published in 10 magazines between 1982 and 1992 -- a total of 41,822 -- were examined to prepare this paper. Then these findings were compared with previous research in which the author examined all the letters to the editor in 10 magazines printed between 1902 and 1912 -- a total of 2,154 letters. Any letters that discussed journalism's standards -- 652 letters out of a total of 2,994 published between 1902 and 1912 and 1,481 between 1982 and 1992 -- are being analyzed. To be labelled as a letter about journalistic standards, a letter needed to discuss what a writer thought was good or bad reporting or complain or praise the media. For example, a letter

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"Letter Opinion on ERA," Public Opinion Quarterly 45 (Fall, 1981), 384-92; and David Pritchard, Dan Berkowitz, "How Readers Letters May Influence Editors and News Emphasis: A Content Analysis of 10 Newspapers, 1948-1978," Journalism Quarterly, 68, Autumn 1991), 388-95.

[15] David Nord, "The Nature of Historical Research," in Research Methods in Mass Communication eds. Guido Stempel and Bruce Westley (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1989).

[16] David Nord, "Reading the Newspaper, Strategies and Politics of Reader Response, Chicago 1912-1917," Journal of Communication, 45 (3), 1995, 67.

that said "We have to look at mass media as an instrument to stir and provoke society,"[17] was considered a letter about journalistic standards. Or if a letter mentioned comments similar to this: "your magazine is participating in the despicable practice of our modern press community, first to build up a man to celebrity proportions and then to dump him with complete disregard for truth,"[18] that too, was considered a letter about journalistic standards. Thus the author of this paper tried to be as broad-minded as possible when deciding if a letter was a remark about journalistic standards. If a letter had any discussion in it about the media, it was labelled as a comment on journalistic standards. It was deemed too difficult to double-check the coding on all the letters, so three different samplings of letters were given to colleagues to see if they agreed with the labelling of letters considered to be discussions of journalistic standards. The themes of the letters from the two different eras will be explored in detail in further research. For now, however, the striking differences in the number of letters about journalism -- down from about 30 percent to 3.5 percent -- seems worthy of discussion on its own merits.

The criteria for selecting each publication that was studied is explained in more detail in the footnotes accompanying each title. Essentially the magazines from 1902 to 1912 were selected to represent a cross-section of the magazine field, from the most radical, Arena magazine, to the more mainstream and profit-obsessed Munsey's. The magazines from 1982 to 1992 were then selected on the basis of their rough similarity to the ones from 1902 to 1912. For example, World's Work , a business publication, is being compared with Forbes in this study because of the two magazines' similarity in scope and purpose. A cross-section of the 1982 to 1992 American magazine world was also sought, so high-circulation, mainstream magazines, such as Time and Newsweek, which sell 4 million and 3 million copies respectively each week, were studied along with considerably smaller and more radical publications such as The Progressive and The Nation.[19]

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[17] Michael Schaffer, Lake Bluff, Ill., Letter to the Editor, U.S. News and World Report, 27 January, 1992, 8.

[18] Norma K. Turner, Watervliet, Mich., Letter to the Editor, Atlantic, February 1982, 5.

[19] The 10 magazines from two different eras were compared to each other in these rough pairings: Munsey's, with its bottom line and profit obsession was compared to the highly commercial and money-making Time, the left-wing radical Arena publication was compared to today's Progressive; Everybody's, with its emphasis on capturing a wide range of readers was compared to Life; an early radical, left-wing publication, The Independent, was compared to today's equally radical Nation; Harper's Weekly was compared to today's Harper's monthly for obvious reasons; Cosmopolitan and Newsweek were paired together because they both were aimed at a non-political general audience; the middle-class oriented Ladies' Home Journal was compared to the equally conservative U. S. News and World Report, while Collier's and Atlantic were looked at together because they both had a

Why Consider 1902-1912 and 1982-1992?

The period from 1902 to 1912 was initially selected for study for several reasons. To begin with it was the muckraking era. And the muckraking era, many scholars argue, has had a significant and enduring impact on present-day journalism. For example, Robert Miraldi says muckraking, with its "adversarial, critical and anti-authoritarian stance,"[20] changed basic expectations about responsible journalistic standards of conduct. Richard B. Kielbowicz writes that "muckraking marked a departure in journalism . . .the better muckraking articles marshaled details unearthed in thorough investigations. Significantly, the exposés derived their power from well-selected facts, not forceful polemics."[21] Will Irwin argues that before Ida Tarbell, Lincoln Steffens and David Graham Phillips engaged in investigative work in the muckraking magazines, the press typically did not write about a subject until an incident "came before a court or commission, thus becoming news in the conventional sense."[22] Thus, muckraking is believed to have changed fundamental perceptions of what constituted 'good' press conduct and press responsibility.[23]

Looking beyond muckraking, however, several journalism historians have argued that the early years of the twentieth century were "an important transitional period in the history of journalism."[24] The new journalistic methodology of objectivity was being developed and widely implemented. At the same time, several newspapers, including the Chicago Tribune, were experimenting with the idea that a "newspaper must be oriented less to the news and more to the readers. It was expected that it must have great variety; it must be balanced and impartial, and most of all it must enter into the everyday life of its readers."[25]

The period 1982 to 1992 was chosen for comparison with the 1902-1912 period for three reasons. On a pragmatic basis, a modern 10-year period was initially sought by the author that would allow access to the actual printed copies of the magazines. Ultimately this

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heavy literary tradition and appealed to the up-scale intelligentsia; McClure's and The New Republic were paired together because they both emphasized exposes, particularly of government wrong-doing and strong political reporting.

[20] Robert Miraldi, Muckraking and Objectivity: Journalism's Colliding Traditions (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), 6.

[21] Richard B. Kielbowicz, "The Media and Reform, 1900-1917," in Wm D. Sloan, James G. Stovall, and James Startt (eds.) The Media in America 2nd ed. (Scottsdale, Arizona: Publishing Horizons, 1993).

[22] Will Irwin, "The American Newspaper: A Study of Journalism in Its Relation to the Public; Part 8, All the News that's Fit to Print," Collier's Magazine 47 (6 May 1911), 17.

[23] R. Miraldi, Muckraking and Objectivity, 5.

[24] Nord, "Reading the Newspaper," Journal of Communication, 77.

[25] Ibid, 71.

wish did not come true and some microfilm study was needed. The period 1982 to 1992 also seemed a time that was just a few years into the past and yet could provide a sense of historical distance. In addition, a 10-year period that inched into two separate decades ('82 to '92), was sought, similar to the muckraking age of 1902 to 1912.

Muckraking Literature Review -- Previous Research

Many books and scholarly articles have defined and described the muckraking phenomenon of 1902 to 1912. Muckraking is defined here as the investigative magazine journalism that swept across America between 1902 and 1912, featuring factual accounts of societal corruption. For the most part earlier research about muckraking falls into five major categories: narrative descriptions of the content of the investigative articles;[26] biographies of the muckrakers;[27] examinations of the factors contributing to the rise and fall of muckraking;[28] discussions of the importance of muckraking to the Progressive political reform movement;[29] and explorations of the importance of muckraking to the history and development of journalism.[30]

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[26] Two of the most frequently cited books that tell the story of muckraking and give samples of articles published during the height of the muckraking era are: Filler's 1939 book, The Muckrakers, and The Muckrakers, by Arthur and Lila Weinberg. Filler's book sets out a chronology of the muckraking movement. Filler includes excerpts from the muckraking articles and offers critical analysis.

[27] Biographies and autobiographies of the muckrakers describing the individual muckrakers' life struggles before, during, and after the muckraking phenomenon abound. The most notable include: Donald H. Bragaw's 1970 dissertation examining the life of social activist Charles Edward Russell, Soldier for the Common Good: The Life and Career of Charles Edward Russell (Ph.D. diss., Syracuse University, 1970); Justin Kaplan's Lincoln Steffens: A Biography (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974); and Kathleen Brady's 1984 account of feminist, scholar, historian Ida Tarbell, entitled Ida Tarbell: Portrait of a Muckraker (New York: Macmillan Co.). Kaplan portrays Steffens as a representative of a whole generation of muckrakers: The muckrakers were well-educated and idealistic sons and daughters of the middle class who fervently believed American citizens would readily transform the evils of society if only they were exposed to the problems through plainly written magazine stories, Kaplan asserts. Many other biographical and autobiographical works about or by the muckrakers are too numerous to review in detail here. Some of the more noteworthy include: Peter Lyon, Success Story: The Life and Times of S. S. McClure (New York: Scribner's, 1963); S.S. McClure, My Autobiography (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co. 1913); Robert LaFollette, Autobiography (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1960); and James B. Lane, Jacob A. Riis and the American City (New York: National University Publications, 1974).

[28] The many articles that discuss and examine the factors involved in the rise and fall of muckraking are too numerous to review in depth here. The following is a list of just a few of the many articles. Those articles include: John Filler, "The Muckrakers in Flower and in Failure," Essays in American Historiography, eds.Donald Sheehan and Harold C. Syrett, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960); and Bruce Evensen, "The Evangelical Origins of Muckraking," American Journalism 6 1989, 5-29.

This is an impressive amount of material. Yet the literature does not tap into the dialogue about muckraking contained in letters to the editor published in the better known magazines of the era: that is, the muckraking literature has not specifically considered the point of view of members of the audience. How did readers react to muckraking? Did they write hundreds of letter to the editor about it? Moreover, that point of view and response has not been incorporated into the historical record.

Summary of Findings -- Breakdown of Number of Letters in Each Magazine

The four charts presented below summarize the findings of this research. As shown in Table 1, the 10 magazines studied from 1902 to 1912 differed substantially, not only in the total number of letters to the editor each published, but also in the percentage of letters that related to journalism. Collier's printed the most letters on the topic -- 195 journalism letters out of a total of 220 letters. But Arena ran the highest percentage of journalism letters, with 100 percent of its total of 20 letters to the editor dealing with journalistic standards. Arena was followed by McClure's, with 96 percent of its 28 letters commenting on journalistic standards. World's Work followed after that, with 91 percent of its 11 letters discussing journalism and its standards. At the other extreme, Munsey's published no letters to the editor, and none of the letters published in The Independent discussed journalism.

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[29] The relationship between Progressivism and muckraking is explored in the following works: Daniel Aaron, Men of Good Hope: A Story of American Progressives (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951) ; Arthur Mann, The Progressive Era (Hinsdale: Illinois: Dryden Press, 1975); and Richard Hofstadter, The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R. (New York: Vintage Books, 1955). Hofstadter, in particular, argues that the Progressive movement was sparked by muckraking reporters. These reporters, he wrote, had almost a religious mission to warn people about the evils of a powerful class of robber barons. Stanley Key Schultz maintained in a 1965 article that the muckrakers were the publicizing arm of the Progressive reform movement -- that without that publicity the impact of the Progressives would have been negligible. See Stanley Key Schultz, "The Morality of Politics: The Muckrakers Vision of Democracy," Journal of American History 52, 1965, 527-47.

[30] The claim that muckraking altered the traditional style of journalism by making it more active and aggressive is examined in Richard B. Kielbowicz, "The Media and Reform, 1900-1917," in Wm. D. Sloan, James G. Stovall, and James Startt (eds.) The Media in America 2nd ed. (Scottsdale, Arizona: Publishing Horizons, 1993); Still other articles that explore the way muckraking changed journalism include: Robert E. Park, "The Natural History of the Newspaper," American Journal of Sociology, 29, (November, 1923), 273-289; 297; Judson Grenier Jr., "Muckraking and Muckrakers: An Historical Definition," Journalism Quarterly, Autumn, 1960.

Table 1. Total letters by magazine and percentages related to journalism, **1902-1912**.

Magazine	All Letters	Letters about Journalism	% Related to Journalism
Arena	20	20	100 %
Collier's	220	195	89 %
Cosmopolitan	70	41	59 %
Everybody's	615	180	29 %
Harper's Week	1108	127	12 %
Independent	9	0	0 %
Ladies' H. Journal	73	52	71 %
McClure's	28	27	96 %
Munsey's	9	0	0 %
World's Work	11	10	91 %
Totals	2,154	652	30 %

Table 2. **1902-1912** Number of letters about journalism published by magazine by year.

Magazine	1902	1903	1904	1905	1906	1907	1908	1909	1910	1911	1912
Arena	0	0	16	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0
Collier's	0	0	7	4	4	37	27	26	32	32	26
Cosmo	0	0	0	0	31	2	6	0	1	1	0
Everybody	0	5	29	17	37	9	7	7	10	16	43
Harper's	0	0	23	5	0	53	15	2	24	5	0
Indep.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ladies' Journal	0	0	0	0	0	35	0	8	1	0	8
McClure's	0	0	26	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Munsey's	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
World's W	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1		9	0
Totals	0	5	101	26	72	136	60	44	68	63	77

Table 3 below shows that The Nation magazine printed the highest percentage of letters to the editor about journalistic standards between 1982 and 1992 -- 14 percent, or 263 letters out of its total of 1,878 published letters. Harper's magazine had the second highest percentage of letters about journalism -- 7.4 percent, which worked out to 83 letters out of its 1,118 total of published letters. The highest number of letters about journalism, however, were printed in Newsweek -- 421. However, Newsweek printed a total of 7,869 letters to the editor from 1982 to 1992. This means that letters about journalism constituted only 5.3 percent of all the letters in the magazine. Newsweek's chief rival, Time magazine, had the second highest number of journalism letters -- a total of 296. But this made up only 2.4 percent of Time's 11,892 published letters to the editor over the 10-year period examined. On the other end of the scale, Forbes printed the lowest percentage of letters about journalism, only .69 percent, or 23 out of its 3,322 published letters to the editor. Atlantic and U.S News and World Report both tied for the second lowest percentage of journalism letters. Atlantic published 32 letters about journalism out of a total of 1,841 letters printed from 1982 to 1992. U.S. News and World Report printed 134 letters about journalism out of 7,813 published letters. Both magazines printed 1.7 percent of their total number of letters about journalistic standards.

Table 3. Total number of letters by magazine and percentages related to journalism, **1982-1992**.

Magazine	**All Letters**	**Letters about Journalism**	**% Related to Journalism**
Atlantic	1,841	32	1.7 %
Forbes	3,322	23	.69 %
Harper's	1,118	83	7.4 %
Life	1,650	50	3 %
Nation	1,878	263	14 %
New Republic	2,697	90	3.3 %
Newsweek	7,869	421	5.3 %
Progressive	1,742	89	5.1 %
Time	11,892	296	2.4 %
U.S. News	7,813	134	1.7 %
Totals	41,822	1,481	3.5 %

Table 4. Number of letters about journalism published by magazine by year. **1982-1992**

Magazine	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Atlantic	8	2	1	2	0	0	2	3	8	4	2
Forbes	1	2	7	2	3	0	4	3	0	0	1
Harper's	62	6	2	0	1	1	3	7	0	0	1
Life	2	3	2	10	2	4	6	9	6	4	2
Nation	29	20	26	17	38	35	16	18	51	11	2
New Republic	20	4	9	6	9	4	6	2	4	11	15
Newsweek	15	55	57	44	27	33	33	36	40	40	41
Progressive	24	2	7	17	3	5	7	6	12	4	2
Time	9	45	58	32	19	24	34	27	6	23	19
U.S News	6	12	22	6	1	16	12	12	12	19	16
Totals	**176**	**151**	**151**	**136**	**103**	**122**	**123**	**123**	**139**	**116**	**101**

Table 4 shows the number of letters about journalistic standards steadily declined throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s. In 1982 all the 10 magazines printed 176 letters to the editor about journalism. But by 1991 the number of journalism letters decreased to 116 and by 1992 it was down to 101. This means that within the span of 10 years the number of letters to the editor discussing journalistic standards in the 10 magazines decreased by more than 50 percent.

Discussion/Analysis

What are the implications of these findings? To begin with, these findings provide strong primary evidence that the number of letters to the editor about journalism in magazines has declined dramatically from the beginning to the end of the 20th century. Using this information, magazine editors and scholars have a yardstick by which to measure how the conversation from magazine readers to editors has changed in this century. Where readers once felt comfortable and inclined to give feedback to magazine editors about the job they were doing, now the lack of comment can be seen as an indication that readers are decidedly uninterested in journalistic topics.

For magazine editors, this presents a series of questions. Should editors attempt to re-engage readers in a conversation about the good and bad qualities of journalism? Is such a dialogue necessary for a healthy magazine? Or is it necessary for a healthy democracy? Magazine editors may decide that readers debating journalistic standards is just too much of an insider discussion -- like surgeons debating over which scalpel works best. The patients don't really care, nor should they. But if discussions about journalistic standards with readers are deemed vital and necessary, how can such re-engagement be achieved? How do editors engage an audience in a conversation on a topic that does not seem to evoke a passionate hatred, as is often depicted, but more problematically, simple disinterest?

This preliminary research should pose some interesting challenges for scholars as well. The pursuit of 'why' is dangerous for a historian. But it's tempting to ask other journalism historians to join in a consideration of what factors may have contributed to the decline of letters to the editor about journalism. It's easy to simply say that no one writes letters at all anymore. But that assertion does not explain the average of 50,000 letters to the editor received each year at Time magazine. It can be assumed that the other nine modern magazines receive a equally high number of thousands of letters as well, much more than they publish, although not all the magazines conveniently list how many letters they receive each year. Editors play a role in deciding which of the thousands of letters will be published, of course. But all 10 of the modern magazines publish frequent editorials that pledge to readers that letters to the editor are printed not on the basis of any political agenda but merely as a representative sampling. If the representative sampling pledge is upheld the evidence suggests that many of today's magazine readers write letters to the editor, but on subjects other than the press.

Was there something special about the period 1902 to 1912 that encouraged people to write letters to magazines during those years? And is that special something now gone? Did the magazines represent something different then? Editors in both time periods published regular pleas for reader response. It's a tantalizing question to ask why a much smaller percentage of readers choose to be media analysts today when they do take pen to paper or pound out a missive on their computer.

In 1902 the average income in America was $1,025 a year. A new car costs $900. The average life expectancy was 47. A new house sold for an average of $3,395 and a gallon of milk costs .28 cents. In 1982 the median household income was $31,553. Americans were expected to live an average of 76 years. A new car cost $12,000 and a gallon of milk sold for 69 cents.[31] History can provide such raw data -- the difficulty lies in trying to figure out why, if, and/or how changes in the modern world may have led people to write less letters to the editor about journalism. It also can't easily explain why the remaining few letters about journalism experienced a thematic change.

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[31] according to figures culled from the Information Please 1996 Almanac, 49th edition (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1996.)

But such a change has occurred. Preliminary analysis of the letters to the editor suggest that when readers wrote letters about journalism between 1982 to 1992, it was mainly to attack the accuracy of an article, with no further comment made having to do with journalistic standards. Granted, the theme of all the modern letters to the editor have not yet been methodically analyzed and labelled. But so far more than 60 percent of the letters that discuss journalism between 1982 and 1992 are concerned solely with the accuracy of a given article. That is, the letter writers simply say "your article was inaccurate and here's why." An example can be found in a letter to Newsweek that took the magazine to task for failing to mention "the watchdog organization Accuracy in Media in your recent discussion of media bias."[32] Another letter, this one taking Time to task, said "Your story on the press contained two factual errors . . .First, you misspelled my name."[33]

There is little indication of hatred of the press in most of the letters from the modern period examined. There is a supreme indifference evident, however, in the incredible shrinking debate over journalistic standards in modern letters to the editor. In contrast, the 1902-1912 letters exhibit a great affection for the press, with only a few exceptions. In examining published discussion of the press in the 1800s, Dicken-Garcia discovered a large number of press critics who wanted the press brought under control to prevent a perceived deterioration of established socio-political structures and values.[34] Although a handful of letter writers expressed similar views in the muckraking era, the majority of readers actually defended the press and hailed its good works.

As an example, a reader, described only as a "European University Professor," wrote to McClure's and said: "I find all the articles in McClure's to be the ideal literature of a free republic, of a free people. It is by constant exposures of public evils that evils are minimized."[35] Another example can be seen in a 1904 letter from "A Minister, New Haven, Connecticut, in McClure's," who wrote that "you are preaching a gospel of such downright fearlessness that I am personally grateful beyond words."[36]

This is not to suggest that letters to the editor between 1902 and 1912 were nothing but fan mail. There were some harsh words. For instance, a letter writer told Cosmopolitan that many popular magazines, including Cosmopolitan, were destroying morality by publishing "vicious, demoralizing [stories] . . . that are enervating to the virtues of truthfulness and honesty."[37] However, the majority of the letter writers between 1902 and 1912 -- even those that lambasted the press for its shortcomings -- said they sincerely believed the press was a powerful instrument for good; only occasionally did it need to be reminded of its powers and responsibilities, to straighten out and live up to public expectations. Thus, for the most part, readers from the muckraking era seemed to express what some might describe as either a naive or optimistic notion that the press would and could improve, simply if its shortcomings were pointed out.

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[32] Lambert Ford, Yucca Valley, California, Letter to the Editor, Newsweek, May 21, 1984, 7.

[33] Bill Vogrin, Topeka, Kans., Letters, Time, 9 January 1984, 2.

[34] Dicken-Garcia, Journalistic Standards, 148.

[35] Letters to the Editor, McClure's, May 1904, 223.

[36] Letters to the Editor, McClure's, May 1902, 223.

Starting with Dicken-Garcia's ground-breaking look at letters to the editor in the 1800s and moving on to the present examination of letters to the editor between 1902-1912 and 1982-1992 one can see just how much the relationship between magazines and their audience has changed. Dicken-Garcia found readers and journalists in the 1800s engaged in many discussions about journalistic standards. Critics of the 1800s began to grapple with the meaning of the press in society, Dicken-Garcia writes, and to ask hard questions about appropriate journalistic boundaries of conduct. The research presented here establishes that this debate over journalistic standards continued throughout the muckraking era - at least in the high percentage of letters to the editor examined in the 10 magazines surveyed during the period 1902-1912. But the debate over journalistic standards dramatically declined in the letters to the editor published in 10 new magazines some 80 years later -- and this decrease is puzzling.

Perhaps today's distancing of readers from journalists is the ultimate conclusion of a process that started in the 1890s. Dicken-Garcia argues that a separation of the two groups -- readers from journalists -- began in the late 1800s. It was caused in part by the growing complexity of the news business. The press's capabilities, procedures, and goals were changing as production and distribution technologies developed. By 1890, according to Dicken-Garcia, journalists worked within a social institution grown so complex that even they had difficulty understanding it, while 'outsiders,' that is non-journalists, stood little chance at all. Dicken-Garcia says that by the end of the 1800s the press was evolving "from essentially a one- or two-person small shop operation of precarious stability to a corporate structure engaging thousands and irreversibly interlocked with society."[38] As a result of this change, journalists were becoming a separate class and thinking of themselves as different from their readers, she argues. But it's puzzling that these differences between readers and journalists did not prevent readers from discussing journalistic standards in letters between 1902 and 1912.

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[37] letter from H.S. Cooper, Galveston, Texas, in "Magazine Shop-Talk," Cosmopolitan, April 1911, 721.

[38] Dicken-Garcia, Journalistic Standards, 224.

It is worth considering if the modern gap in views between journalists and readers is the result of what Douglas Birkhead and other journalism historians have called a new sense of professionalism. That professionalism, involving new journalism fraternal organizations, some precursors to unions and discussions of codes of ethics, evolved during the first decade of this century, Birkhead writes.[39] One can speculate that if journalists are seen as professionals, similar to lawyers and doctors, with their own set of ethical rules and guidelines and ways to police themselves, such a perception might discourage the laymen from feeling qualified to comment on a reporter's behavior.

Suggestions for Future Research

The themes of all the modern letters to the editor about journalistic standards are being categorized and analyzed. They will then be compared with the findings from letters about journalistic standards from 1902 to 1912. Such themes as public service, fairness, the press as a moral force, and the need for truth telling, emerged from those earlier letters. It will be interesting to be able to determine exactly what predominant themes emerge from the modern letters and how they might echo or vary from the earlier letters from 1902. That part of the work lies ahead.

Further research can also investigate whether there was indeed a unique set of circumstances in the muckraking era that might have prompted much more letters to the editor about journalism. Maybe the outpouring of letters about journalistic standards during this time suggests that new journalistic standards were indeed actually being set during the muckraking era. No one in 10 years worth of letters, from 1902 to 1912, ever directly called muckraking a brand new journalistic phenomenon. But readers commented frequently about journalistic standards and procedures, perhaps indirectly indicating that something was changing in journalism and they wanted to express their feelings about it. To fully explore this question clearly requires more research -- studying expressions of journalistic standards in detail before and after the muckraking period and before 1982.

Conclusion

The research presented here establishes that there was a continuing debate among magazine readers over journalistic standards throughout the muckraking era -- at least in the high percentage of hundreds of letters to the editor published in 10 popular magazines of the time. Then the research shows that in the 1980s the debate among readers in 10 popular magazines shrank dramatically and nearly disappeared. Further research should try to explore the meaning of this decline in more detail and move toward some more historical and factual explanations. In the meantime the assertion that readers are angry about the way journalists conduct their business may possibly need to be reconsidered in light of the declining numbers this research shows. The numbers seem to indicate indifference rather than anger.

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[39] Douglas Birkhead, "Presenting the Press, Journalism and the Professional Project," Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 1982, 14.

The number of published views from readers presented here are primary sources. They show that a high percentage of a particular group of readers bothered to debate journalistic standards during the muckraking era. And now that percentage of readers involved in the debate has dwindled--from 30 percent to 3.5 percent.

Nord says more audience studies are needed. "We don't need more philosophy, not more theory about audience activity or passivity," he writes, "but rather more empirical research, research that links actual readers with texts and historical and social contexts."[40] He further urges the examination of history for the study of reader response "for history is the discipline of context, of the rich specificity of time and place. But the historian faces a daunting task . . .Indeed the experience of most readers in the past can never be recovered. Yet historical readership research is possible. Some readers have left behind a residue of their reading: diaries, memoirs . . . letters to editors. The work of building a genuine social history of reading is well under way -- at least a history of the reading of books. The reading of journalism, however, is even more difficult to trace in the past because journalism is ephemeral and the reading of it so commonplace and unremarkable and therefore so commonly unremarked upon in the historical record. Yet it is precisely this commonness that makes the history of journalism readership central to the broader social history of reading in everyday life."[41]

This research has attempted to build a convincing argument for the need for an examination of audience reaction and discussion of journalistic standards through letters to the editor. There are many compelling reasons for such an examination. For example, the absence of material in journalism history books on letters to the editor reflecting reaction to muckraking and the implied or expressed expectations of journalistic standards in such reaction is an oversight begging for correction. Inclusion of such material in journalism history books could greatly add to the continuing debate over journalistic standards and the role of the press. It is hoped that the somewhat unusual research presented here will live up to Jean Folkerts and Stephen Lacy's prediction that "Unconventional approaches [to journalism history] can lead to a more thoroughly developed concept of holistic history."[42] In the process, this research may contribute to a deeper understanding of muckraking, audience reaction then and now, and the discussion of journalistic standards among today's journalistic audience. Is the widely-reported animosity against the media in fact more a matter of indifference, as the declining number of letters debating journalistic standards reported in this research may indicate? Rather than relying on secondary sources and assumptions about what magazine readers thought about muckraking and what they think about modern journalism, researchers need to find the voice of the public, some of it voiced in letters to the editor and include that in journalism's historical record. In that way a more complete picture of journalistic history can be created-- and a much needed history of journalistic standards.

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[40] Nord, "Reading the Newspaper," Journal of Communication, 87.
[41] Ibid, 88.

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[42] Jean Folkerts and Stephen Lacy, "Journalism History Writing, 1975-1983," Journalism Quarterly 62 (1984), 585.